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COURTESAN PRINCESS



MADAME GRAND

By Gerard

COURTESAN PRINCESS

CATHERINE GRAND, PRINCESSE DE TALLEYRAND

By

ANNETTE JOELSON

GEOFFREY BLES

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To
MAURICE JACOBS
Knowing him amiable
I dedicate this book

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BOOK I—PRELUDE
PICTURES THROUGH A SPY-GLASS

PRELUDE

ON ENTERING THE PRESENCE OF THE FIRST CONSUL, Monsieur de Talleyrand, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was met by a squall of words.

"No wonder we are abused and vilified by England," Bonaparte rapped out, tapping a paper which lay before him with a trembling finger. "I say it is no wonder, Monsieur de Talleyrand, when we expose ourselves to such attacks as these and even our ministers give public example of disorder and ill-conduct."

Talleyrand said nothing. It was no use wasting time and breath by asking questions. He was expecting a tediously long vituperative monologue and remained standing quite still, waiting, his nose in the air, his eyebrows superciliously raised.

The First Consul was extremely angry. The paper, which had been given to him earlier in the day by Fouché, contained an article grossly reviling and defaming both him and his government.

He squared his jaw pugnaciously, as he waxed still warmer with the vehemence of his words.

"Information has reached me that the envoys and ambassadors from foreign Courts are compelled to wait upon your mistress. This must not continue, Monsieur de Talleyrand. The time for free unions is over," he thundered. . . .

But almost as suddenly as it had begun, the storm spent

itself. He continued his attack in a milder voice. Would it not be best if Monsieur de Talleyrand, ex-Bishop of Autun, once again took up the episcopal robes which he had discarded with so little ceremony? Or perhaps, better still, he suggested, would not his Minister of Foreign Affairs allow himself to be invested with the even more impressive purple robes of a cardinal?

Talleyrand answered courteously but firmly. Such a contingency, he regretted, was not possible. He had been thankful to escape from the priesthood. To be quite frank, nothing, nothing whatsoever, would induce him to re-enter it again. He did not consider himself fit for that profession.

"Very well, then, monsieur, but you must banish Madame Grand from your house." The First Consul ended the interview with a spirited ultimatum.

Talleyrand was preparing to follow Bonaparte's advice when suddenly, one day, he was again summoned to the presence of the First Consul. A strange change had come over Bonaparte. In issuing his second ultimatum he was much softer towards Madame Grand and much sterner with his Minister of Foreign Affairs. There was to be no quibbling with the terms of his new proposition. In twenty-four hours' time Monsieur de Talleyrand must make up his mind either to *marry* Madame Grand or to expel her from his house.

Talleyrand's eyes narrowed, but, as ever, his manner remained cold and polished as steel. Logically, volubly, dryly he argued, never for one moment laying aside his customary sang-froid. His objections were skilfully marshalled and enumerated. Surely, he concluded finally, Bonaparte must realise that marriage for a bishop, even an ex-bishop, was impossible and unthinkable.

"Monsieur de Talleyrand," answered Bonaparte unyieldingly, "the Court of the Vatican can do anything." By this he insinuated that Rome, if it wished, could even

make a husband of an ex-bishop without creating overmuch fuss and scandal. Monsieur de Talleyrand could set his mind at rest on that score, at any rate.

So there it was, almost as good as if it were written in black and white, the First Consul's final ultimatum to his Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was for Talleyrand to choose. Either he must submit to the yoke of matrimony or banish Catherine Grand from his house within twenty-four hours' time. For at all costs, in the year 1802, there was to be moral rectitude and orthodox conjugality in the new Court of France. . . .

II

The spring of this year had fallen like a benediction upon Europe, bringing with it a breathing-space, a respite from war. Napoleon Bonaparte, it is true, was still omnipotent on land, but Nelson was lord of the seas. For the moment the scales were evenly balanced. The Peace of Amiens was signed.

Scarcely was the ink dry on this document of temporary harmony than Paris, the war-widow, discarded her sombre weeds and gave herself up to pleasures and festivities. Once again she was the loveliest and liveliest of cities, flirting deliriously ; coquettishly seeking the admiration of the world ; radiant in the luminous fireworks which played across her many bridges spanning the Seine. At night the Louvre shone like a palace on fire, the Place Vendôme twinkled with fairy lights, and the Champs Élysées blazed with prismatic colours. Through the doors of the great *salons* flowed the fine world of this new Paris, men and women of wit and learning, *nouveaux riches* and people of the most opposite political principles. The theatres were crowded, particularly the Théâtre Français where Mesdemoiselles Georges and Duchesnois, " the one so good

as to be beautiful, the other so beautiful as to be good," reigned supreme, enchanting the brilliant audience by their tragic genius.

At Versailles and the Tuileries that other tragedian reigned, a little pale man with an habitual stoop, fine, penetrating eyes and a beautiful nose "such as is sometimes seen on an antique medallion"—Bonaparte, First Consul of France. It was his victories and treaties that had brought the envoys and ambassadors of Europe's greatest powers to Paris and had filled the fine *salons* of the Consuless Josephine, of the fashionable Madame de Staël, of the fascinating Madame Récamier and of Monsieur de Talleyrand, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, with a brilliant crowd of foreigners and Frenchmen.

The most accomplished of courtiers, the astutest of diplomats and the next important man in France after Bonaparte, was this Monsieur de Talleyrand. In the Rue du Bac at the Hôtel of External Affairs, known as the Hôtel de Gallifet, and at his charming villa at Neuilly, he entertained lavishly. His *petits soupers* and *soirées*, frequented by the most illustrious personages from every court and country in Europe, were the most select in Paris.

Through the brilliant company that gathered about him, Talleyrand, dragging his crippled foot, walked with his uncertain gait, the social lion of his own *salon*, as he was of every *salon* in Paris that he visited. Now he smiled on this one, then on that; now he uttered a pretty compliment, now some polished epigram or witty saying that, in less than twenty-four hours, he knew well, would be the talk of Paris. And ever and again, but surreptitiously, his eyes—those strange eyes that sparkled anaconda-like in his cadaverous face—would wander to the end of the two long rows of arm-chairs running up the length of the room. There, at the head, tranquilly doing the honours of his house, sat Madame Grand with her lovely face and eyes, her breath-taking hair, and that little tilted nose that

seemed to speak so eloquently of a thousand pretty whims and fancies.

Like the brightest star in a galaxy, Monsieur de Talleyrand's brilliance outshone that of his guests, while Madame Grand, the loveliest courtesan in Paris, in the physical perfection of her exotic grace and beauty, glowed like a red-purple orchid strangely misplanted in a bed of pale pink carnations.

III

For years Gossip's long ass-like ears had tingled with the names of Charles Maurice de Talleyrand and Catherine Noël Grand. The profligate Abbé of Périgord, former Bishop of Autun, a man with "the most scandalous career in five continents" and with "no more legs than he has heart," was the most engaging and enchanting of companions. It was unthinkable that this distinguished wit, this skilful Minister of Foreign Affairs with so excellent a taste in letters, should have succumbed so completely to the blandishments of Madame Grand, that courtesan with the pretty face and will-o'-the-wisp whims.

Everyone was talking about Catherine Grand. Women in particular could not keep their tongues off her. Said Madame de Staël to Talleyrand one day when, in the company of friends, they were amusing themselves in a boat on the Seine: "Tell me, monsieur, whom do you like best, Madame Grand or myself?" His reply, though gracious and courtly, was equivocal and not to her satisfaction. She pressed her point further.

"Well now," she cried, "suppose we both were to fall into the water. Which would you try to save first?"

"Madame," said Talleyrand dryly, "I should be quite certain that you could swim."

Madame Grand, at this time one of the most maligned and envied women in Paris, possessed a naïve ingenuity.

In her rare beauty she outshone even such rivals as Theresia Tallien and Josephine Bonaparte.

Tall and elegant, her supple figure had all the soft languor habitual to women born in the East. Her hair, when loosened, fell like a golden cloak about her shoulders. Her large, languishing, intensely blue eyes resembled two fine sapphires set in her dazzling face. Gossips had much to say about her eyes. It was often asserted that they were so limpid and so strangely blue in colour because of her natural gift for tears. For Catherine cried easily. At the slightest surprise, even, tears sprang to her eyes and brimmed over. Yet she was never made offensive or ugly by weeping. She cried prettily, quietly and always convincingly.

So perhaps it was because she had reason to weep so often that Madame Grand's eyes were such a deep dark blue that summer of 1802. Bonaparte had been taken by an excess of virtue and, like leaves in a strong wind, the malicious tongues of the Faubourg Saint-Germain were fluttering with fresh rumours.

IV

The First Consul may not consciously have believed in God, but he was, unquestionably, convinced of the efficacy of outward respectability. With his new court in the making, he was fully determined to build it solidly upon a sound basis of regard for convention. Perfect correctness and propriety—those were to be its corner-stones.

Into the midst of this new moral order sudden grumblings and complaints in diplomatic circles fell like a bombshell. The fracas was unexpected, arising out of the fact that, when about to be presented at the Hôtel of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the wives of several ambassadors took it into their heads to turn fastidious. What! they demanded. Must we be received by Madame Grand? Must we be

forced to pay honours and respect to a courtesan? For some fantastic reason this thought suddenly disgusted them and they decided there and then, even in the face of Monsieur de Talleyrand's greatness, not to demean themselves by setting foot in so disgraceful an establishment.

The mutterings, growing in volume, at last reached the ear of that serpent Fouché who, seeking as usual "to shove his dirty feet into everybody else's shoes," forthwith informed the First Consul, hoping in his heart of hearts, by this action, to injure the power of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

About Monsieur de Talleyrand Bonaparte had not felt quite easy in his mind of late. It was extremely awkward, at such a time as this, when it was advisable to have peace between France and the Church of Rome, to have as one's Minister of Foreign Affairs an excommunicated bishop. And now, to crown it all, came Fouché with grave news of discontent in diplomatic circles. That Madame Grand was Talleyrand's mistress Bonaparte knew full well, but that the ex-Bishop of Autun should thus outrage convention by living publicly in open sin with so notorious a woman—that grieved him beyond measure! Something had to be done. If only he could again invest Talleyrand with the cardinal's purple! How sharply and certainly would such a stratagem put an end to difficulties! But that limp-foot Talleyrand, would he come to heel so obediently? It was doubtful, very doubtful. Still, something had to be done.

So Bonaparte had sent for Talleyrand that day of the sudden squall.

V

Meanwhile tongues in Paris had been clanging like bells from tall steeples. Madame de Staël, her hair very badly done in what she deemed a picturesque style, her big face redder than usual, sat down and wrote to Madame Récamier,

who was spending a short time in the country. "Duroc is going to be married to Madame Hervas," she wrote, "and Madame Grand, they say, to M. de Talleyrand. Bonaparte wants everyone to be married."

What monstrous news! Monsieur de Talleyrand to marry Madame Grand!

"*Ce n'est pas possible!*" cried Madame de Genlis, throwing up her hands. "*Ce n'est pas possible!*" Was it not contrary to the nature of things that Talleyrand, who had said of her: "She always surrenders early to avoid scandal," should himself surrender for the same reason?

Monsieur de Talleyrand's old mother was in tears. That a Talleyrand-Périgord, the proud descendant of one of the noblest and oldest families in France, should even so much as think of giving his name to a creature who had been little better than a woman of the town! So shocking a *mésalliance* was inconceivable.

"It is a whim of Talleyrand's, no doubt," they said in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. "Some ridiculous quixotic bravado."

"*Chères amies,*" whispered the women, confidingly, "it cannot happen. She is the sort of woman a man does not marry. Besides, she is middle-aged—forty, if she is a day."

In that last statement there was perfect and abundant truth. Catherine Grand was indeed just verging on forty. Yet she was in the prime of her great beauty. Her teeth were still the prettiest in the world. Her lips were as red as cherries. And though Talleyrand had been living with her for four years, and though he had not always been faithful, yet at this crucial moment she bound him to her "alike by her demands and the spell of her irresistible charms."

VI

Monsieur de Talleyrand was never liberal with his confidences. Now he walked about with his nose in the air, his neck as stiff as ever, his thin, cadaverous face a complete mask, and said nothing. Only the First Consul knew that, come what might, the odour of sanctity at his new Court would not be further violated. . . .

On the 9th of September, 1802, very quietly, Madame Grand became Madame de Talleyrand.

In the pride and glory of her new position she looked more exquisite than ever. And well she might. Had she not reached the heights of her ambition? With her strange naïve ingenuity she had beguiled the mind of the greatest minister in France as, long ago in distant India, she had bewitched the hearts of George François Grand, writer in the service of John Company, and of that virulent author of the *Junius Letters*, Mr. Philip Francis, member of the Supreme Council of Bengal. For in its first ascent her star, that now shone down so brightly upon the waters of the Seine, had once gleamed like an opal upon the broad bosom of the Ganges.

BOOK II
AWAKENING

CHAPTER I

I

MADAME WERLÉE MOVED RESTLESSLY ON HER BED. Her thick hair lay damp as a pad against the pillow. Beads of perspiration clung to her forehead like small transparent blisters. She was in great pain.

Through the open window the music of the waves came drifting in. The night was clear and warm. Dotted with a million stars, the Indian sky resembled a dark blue Sèvres bowl sprinkled with gold dust.

Madame Werlée licked her lips, scaly and rough with small dry fragments of skin. She was a little frightened now that the time had come. If only Pierre, her husband, could have been with her this night, poor Pierre, a prisoner of war and so far away.

Mother of God, how the pains tortured her body! Indeed, indeed, the child was an unconscionable time in coming. Suddenly she thought, what if it should be dead? Her first child, Pierre's child, dead. . . . And what if she, too, died? Dead and cold—cold as the white snows on the peaks of the mighty Himalayas. . . . She bit her lips. She wanted to cry.

The pains came again, but now she felt the child stirring beneath her heart and all fear left her. She lay still, moaning softly. Her heart was filled with an ecstatic happiness.

The song of the sea sounded like an *obbligato* to her joy. And she thought, how well the Tamils have named this

place—Tarangambadi, "the village of the waves." Tranquebar, the Danes had called it. Tranquebar. . . .

Ah, how the pains vexed and tortured her body !

The child was born. . . .

Madame Werlée, lying with her baby held in the crook of her arm, thought again of Pierre, her good husband, so far, far away. For a moment her eyes were blinded by a curtain of tears. Then it lifted. She lay tenderly caressing the infant in her arms, staring down into its face. But Madame was no prophetess and so she did not read a strange destiny in that small, red, puckered face, a destiny that, one day, was to turn this little daughter of a poor seaman into Madame de Talleyrand, and the future Princesse de Bénévent.

II

The child was born on the 21st of November, 1762. Four days later the names of Catherine Noël were given to her in the tiny Roman Catholic parish church of Tranquebar. Her baptismal certificate was written out in Portuguese.

Tranquebar, on the Coromandel Coast not very far from Pondicherry, was a Danish settlement and the first and earliest stronghold of Protestant missionaries in India. But Catherine was neither a Protestant nor Danish. Neither was she Portuguese, though her initiation into the Christian community had been recorded in that language. Both her parents were Catholic and French. Her father, Pierre Werlée, a seafaring Breton who had come out to India in his youth, had been, until just before her birth, Lieutenant du Port at Pondicherry and a servant of the King of France ; her mother, Laurence Alleigne, was the daughter of a master armourer in the employment of the French Company.

Pierre Werlée was a widower when he married Laurence. He had married his first wife, fourteen-year-old Marguerite

da Silva, when he was just twenty-three, but already a Master Pilot of the Ganges stationed at Chandernagore, chief centre of the French in Bengal, situated twenty miles from Calcutta on the right bank of the Hooghly river.

Those were stirring days in India. Dupleix, the hero of the French, and that young Englishman, Robert Clive, were each trying to sow the seeds of a great empire for their respective countries. But at this time the brilliant Frenchman had been recalled home in disgrace, leaving Clive to go from strength to strength, to crush Suraja Dowlah at Plassey and capture Chandernagore.

In the hands of the English Chandernagore was no place for a servant of His Majesty of France, and Pierre Werlée was forced to separate himself from his family for several years. He was still absent when Marguerite died at Chandernagore, barely a decade after their marriage. She had been a good wife to him. She had borne him four children.

When peace was signed between the English and the French, Pierre arrived at Pondicherry and received the office of Lieutenant du Port. Here, in 1758, he married the master-armourer's daughter.

Soon after his marriage hostilities with England broke out again. Laurence and her four step-children went to live at Tranquebar and Pierre's name appeared in a list of French prisoners of war sent for exchange to the Isle of France.

So the first child of his second marriage was born during these vexatious times, and in his absence.

That night at Tranquebar, Catherine Noël Werlée, who was to witness the rise and fall of empires and the beginning and end of many a great man's career, opened her eyes on a world which already seemed to be waiting with bated breath for the laying of that corner-stone of modern democracy, the French Revolution. It was a world gasping for

essential changes in morals and governments, but which, for all that, still allowed hideous corruption to sit on the doorstep of glittering splendour. And the character and fortune of these times into which she was born were, in a great measure, to shape and decide the strange course of her life.

III

The fortunes of war kept Pierre Werlée far from his home, and it was not till peace restored Chandernagore to the French establishment in India that he was again united with his family. Then, for the first time, he set eyes on his daughter Catherine. She was a year old, a little pink-and-gold cherub with large, blue, laughing eyes and the most sweet and piquant baby countenance.

Pierre Werlée was now appointed Capitaine du Port at Chandernagore, with a salary of two thousand two hundred rupees a year! In addition, the Company allowed him to indulge in a little private business. So, at last, he was in fairly comfortable circumstances. He established his family in a roomy and pleasant house, where, when Catherine was four years old, her brother Jean Xavier was born.

Catherine was one of a family of six. She had two half-brothers, two half-sisters and a brother. Of these Marie, her eldest half-sister, and Jean Xavier, her brother, lived to be people of some position in India. Jean Xavier became a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur and the wealthy owner of a thriving indigo concern at Harrah. Marie, who was, for some years at least, to remain closer to Catherine than perhaps any other member of her family, married Michel Nicolas de Calnois, a man of good position, Chief Notary Public at Chandernagore and son of the Senior Councillor in the French Service.

CHAPTER II

FOR THE FIRST YEARS OF HER LIFE CATHERINE PASSED her days in a blissful world. In the mornings she played with her dolls, long-legged wooden creatures with painted cheeks which, for all their gaucherie, she adored. In the afternoons, gowned in a billowing dress with a beribboned bonnet on her curly head, she was taken for a walk. At such times, in her quaint attire, she was an exact and perfect miniature of her mother. She fancied herself most in her best gown of blue silk, trimmed with pink ribbons. Attired in this dress, she would stand for long minutes preening herself with grave infant vanity before a mirror. For Catherine, like all children of her time, was extraordinarily precocious. She was a lovely, light-hearted little creature, born for sunshine and happiness, dainty as a bit of thistledown.

When she grew a little older her education began. Her mother taught her to read and to write, to know her catechism and to sing a few pretty airs, promising, too, that some day she might learn to play upon the harp. This, as far as it went, was not a very inspiring education, but then she was, after all, only the daughter of a government official and not the male heir of a great family destined to carry through the world the proud banner of fortune and fame. Her destiny, like that of all girls of her period, was matrimony, to which she would have to give herself dutifully when the time came. The time came early in

those days. Girls were married in extreme youth, in childhood almost. To be eighteen and unmarried was to be an old maid.

But if her education was unexact and trivial in respect to learning, it was, when she grew a little older, profound and extremely thorough with regard to social graces. By the time she was thirteen Catherine had made herself mistress of all the "airs and elegances of established fashion." She had studied the correct affectations of gesture and carriage, and was proficient in the art of smiles and nods, of dimplings and pouts. She knew how to take the floor and dance a graceful measure. Of the fine art of the fan, too, she had made herself mistress, so that "one instant it whispered invitingly as it played over her mischievous lips and laughing eyes," and the next, "in a sudden flash of temper," she could make it snap out "a reprimanding 'Prithee, no more'." In a hundred other tricks she was expert. She held her head superbly high, ate like a pecking bird, drank with fluttering lashes, blew her small impertinent nose most daintily and warbled delicate little airs in a charming flutelike treble.

What a lithe and lovely being she was at this age—a Dresden china figure with features of artful piquancy and the body of a wood-nymph! Her neck was long and tapering, her hair massed in lively wanton curls. Her eyes, now luminous now languid, gave her face a variety of expressions. Her nose, slightly tilted, was as pretty as could be. She was the quintessence of delicate childish elegance and mature sophisticated allurements.

For so enchanting a little creature an entrée into that polite society which whirled through the grand portals of Ghyretti House, the home of the French Governor, Monsieur Chevalier, was assured. Catherine Werlée became the belle of Chandernagore.

II

There were no hill stations to which Europeans could escape during the summer heat, in the days when Mr. Warren Hastings was Governor-General of Bengal and Mr. Philip Francis the next most important member on the Supreme Council of India. Instead of the hills, the residents of Calcutta sought cool airs and fresh breezes by going up the Hooghly river to one or other of the settlements that had sprung up on its banks. Serampore, an old Danish outpost, was one of the most popular of these holiday resorts, not alone because of the excellence of its famous "Denmark Tavern," but also because of its proximity to Chandernagore.

With peace between England and France, those were the golden days of Chandernagore, and Jean Baptiste Chevalier, visionary and most adventurous and cultured of gentlemen, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis, was its illustrious governor. He made Chandernagore a prosperous outpost of France, turning it, socially, into a veritable Paris in India. And when, a year after making the charming and adoring Marie Anne de la Tremblaye his wife, he built his famous country residence, Ghyretti House, it was said to rival in splendour and magnificence the very glories of Versailles. Even if this be an exaggeration, one thing is certain; the garden-house of Ghyretti, situated a few miles to the south of Chandernagore, was indeed one of the finest buildings in India. High walls surrounded the magnificently palatial house, its splendid gardens, its huge circular courtyard, and its spacious stables which could amply accommodate a hundred horses. Through the great gateway the road swept, to pass onward down a grand avenue of tall trees, ending only when it reached the massive front

portico ornamented in the Greek manner with an Ionic peristyle.

No less beautiful than its exterior was the interior of Ghyretti House. Here were ceilings that had been painted by a master hand, wonderful cornices and statuary of rare beauty. The *salon* was of magnificent proportions, the hall thirty-six feet high. But perhaps the greatest splendour of all was lavished on the wide sweeping staircase, so grand in conception, so noble in its proportions.

A dignified and majestic edifice was this palace of Ghyretti. Even the Bengalese made a proverb about it, saying that in its great courtyard rose both the sun and the moon. Governor Chevalier called it his "*Jardin de l'amitié*," and in it, with pomp and circumstance, he entertained great assemblies at suppers, balls and routs. On such occasions hundreds of gay equipages, carriages, phaetons and palanqueens blocked the long wide avenue. In the great hall fine gentlemen and ladies supped and danced with much gaiety and gallantry. Laughter echoed from room to room. On white moonlit nights lovers, like happy ghosts, flitted among the tall trees in the garden, and often from the summer-house sheltering in dark, protecting shadows, came the throbbing plaints of passionate serenades.

To this Indian Versailles was invited all the beauty and fashion of Chandernagore, Serampore and other neighbouring settlements. Here, too, from Calcutta, came the cream of society, glittering with splendour, to partake of the lavish Gallic hospitality which Monsieur Chevalier so delightfully dispensed. Indeed, even such august representatives of English sovereignty in India as Mr. Warren Hastings, Mr. Philip Francis and Mr. Richard Barwell many a time set aside their private and political quarrels to honour with their presence some ball or rout or banquet at Ghyretti House. In their green-painted budgerows they came down the river from Calcutta with all speed. Frequently on such occasions they were accompanied by

great ladies ; Mr. Hastings brought his own dearest Marian, she of the auburn hair and countenance of gentle childlike simplicity, and young Mrs. Motte, her inseparable friend, who was pretty Mary Touchet before her marriage. Lady Chambers, whom Dr. Samuel Johnson had deemed " exquisitely beautiful " when, as a very young girl, he knew her in England, came with her husband, Sir Robert, Judge of the Supreme Court of Bengal ; Mr. Richard Barwell brought delightful Mrs. Barwell with her winning ways, she who had once sat for Sir Joshua Reynolds as model for his Hebe, and at whose shrine many a gentleman had worshipped when, as the celebrated Miss Sanderson, she was the toast of Calcutta.

It was, indeed, a gay and gallant company which flitted in and out of the hospitable portals of Ghyretti House, to which, on occasion, Monsieur Chevalier invited that enchantingly lovely child, Catherine Noël Werlée. Rather over-fine company, some might think, for the daughter of a one-time Breton seafaring man. However, it must be remembered that Pierre Werlée was at this time the much-respected Capitaine du Port, and one of his daughters, Marie, had contracted a good marriage with Michel Nicolas de Calnois, the Chief Notary Public. But above all, Catherine herself was beautiful as Venus. This mere child of less than fifteen years of age far outvalled in exquisiteness of face and figure and gracefulness of carriage even the finest ladies of the grand society to which, upon occasion, Monsieur Chevalier invited her.

III

At Ghyretti House Catherine first set eyes on the tall handsome figure and fine classical features of Mr. Philip Francis, member of the Supreme Council of Bengal. It was here, too, one night, that she made the acquaintance

of a certain gentleman in the employment of the British East India Company, George François Grand by name.

Mr. Grand had but recently arrived in Calcutta from Madras, the bearer of despatches for the Governor-General from Colonel Maclean. Mr. Hastings, whom he had met some years before, had received him with great courtesy and kindness and had expressed the wish that the young man should consider himself an intimate associate of the Governor's household. Extremely happy in his new surroundings, Grand struck up a pleasant friendship with the military and private secretaries, Major William Palmer and Major Gall, and, indeed, himself performed a considerable amount of clerical work for Mr. Hastings, spending many hours in the writing-room of the Presidency, busily occupied in copying out official despatches and secret papers.

As a result of his association with the Governor-General's family, Grand met all the people of fashionable Calcutta society, even haughty Mr. Francis with his superior airs and face of bronze. The beautiful houses on Garden Reach opened their doors to him. He often dined with the Barwells and during dinner pelted many a pretty pink cheek with little bread pills, *à la mode de Bengale*, for this was a game much in vogue with people of *ton* in Calcutta. To balls, too, he went, and to the races and that scene of riotous and noisy festivity and convivial carousals, the Harmonic Tavern. For a gold mohur he watched, from a seat in a box, the latest production at the theatre, and on many a moonlight night joined a walking party to stroll beside the dark silent river, along that portion of the paddy-field-covered "maidan" known as the Esplanade. Sometimes, too, in a budgerow, he went up the river at night with a company of friends in search of cooling breezes. Under the starred Indian sky the gaily-painted barge crept up the stream, its lights reflected in the dark rippling water. On board there was gaiety, voices raised

in song and the harmony of musical instruments—viols and the thin sweet sighs of oboes and the pleasant rich tones of clarinets.

Often, too, at the end of a long week of work, Mr. Grand and his two good friends, Major Palmer and Major Gall, made longer excursions up the Hooghly. Their favourite week-end refuge was the home of Mr. Croft, owner of a large sugar-cane plantation at Sooksagur. Then one day they went still further on to Chandernagore. Upon hearing of their arrival, and because of his friendship for Mr. Hastings, Monsieur Chevalier extended the hospitality of his famous mansion to the two gentlemen of the English Governor's household and to their companion, the writer in the services of John Company.

Again and again, after this, the gaiety and delight of Ghyretti House drew the three friends up the river from Calcutta at the end of a hard week's work. So it happened, at last, that George François Grand met Catherine Noël Werlée, of whose beauty, already celebrated beyond the bounds of Chandernagore, he had heard such ardent and glowing accounts.

CHAPTER III

I

THE GREAT HALL OF GHYRETTI HOUSE WAS CROWDED that night with a brilliant gathering. Wide doors stood open to the cool night breezes ; hundreds of candles blazing in the massive chandeliers and gilded sconces set shadows dancing on the smooth high walls.

Near the foot of the great staircase, her gown of diaphanous blue accentuating the creamy whiteness of her skin and the vivid crimson of her lips, her eyes dancing and her laughter rippling merry as a child's, stood Catherine Werlée. A posy of blood-red roses nestled in the lace upon her breast. She wore no jewellery. In her slender hands she held a tiny ivory fan, which she used charmingly with graceful, teasing movements of her bare dimpled arms.

With her head held high and her golden hair framing the perfect oval of her face, she made a picture to dazzle the eyes of the most jaded of men. Small wonder, then, that at sight of her George François Grand, writer in the employment of the British Company, felt that suddenly seraphim had opened the gates of Paradise to him. In that first instant of glimpsing her bewildering beauty, his heart was at her feet. He asked to be presented. In a half-dream he kissed her finger-tips with adoration and, drawing her hand through his arm, led her up the staircase at his side.

They danced ; they talked. The night wore on to

dawn. At last the time came for George to take his leave. When he bade her adieu she raised her lazy laughing eyes to his. Entranced, he stood gazing as if spellbound into their blue depths. A sharp little tap of her fan on his wrist brought him to his senses.

"Forgive me, mademoiselle," he murmured gravely.

His pompous weightiness filled her with a strange mixture of awe and gentle amusement. "For what do you apologise, monsieur?" she asked softly, tantalisingly provocative.

"For keeping you standing here so long that I may look my fill into the loveliest eyes in India," he answered with clumsy gallantry. He stooped and kissed her hand and the next moment was gone.

Deep in thought, Catherine stood tapping her little foot. A strange, plain, unprepossessing and rather dull man, this Mr. Grand, with his stiff, staid, heavy manner. Yet there was something kind and solid and dependable about him. She rather liked him. She really rather liked him. . . .

Again and again Mr. Grand came to Ghyretti House, and then one fine day he called to pay his respects to Monsieur Pierre Werlée, the Capitaine du Port, and his good wife. . . . They said in Chandernagore that George Grand laid siege to Catherine Werlée's heart like an elephant wooing a rose.

In the end he had his way. When he heard from her own lips, at last, of the tender feelings that she carried in her heart for him, he fell on his knees and kissed the hem of her gown. For a moment the stiff and pompous Mr. Grand was quite overwrought. Then he was on his feet again. He pressed her head against his shoulder. He felt as if he had conquered the world, and, indeed, never before in all his life had he experienced so exquisite a happiness.

Though there was a great disparity in the ages of Catherine

and her suitor—Grand being very nearly twice as old as she—the old Capitaine du Port gave them his blessing gladly. He greatly approved of Mr. Grand's family, particularly of his maternal grandfather who had been a seigneur of France in the days of Louis XIV. With due ceremony the betrothal was announced, Monsieur Werlée promising that the wedding might take place just as soon as Mr. Grand had obtained a situation which would better enable him to set up a pleasant and suitable home for lovely Catherine. The young man was by no means a penniless lover, for he did have a writership in the British Company. Nevertheless his future father-in-law, ever a shrewd man, deemed his material position far from satisfactory.

And George, anxious to possess for ever the prize which he had won, set to work with all haste to improve his station in life.

II

Though a servant of the British India Company, Grand was not an Englishman. His maternal grandfather, the Seigneur de Virly, had fled from France at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes to take refuge in England. There his daughter married a gentleman from Switzerland named Grand. Their son, George François, was born on the shores of the lake of Geneva and was educated at the University of Lausanne. Unfortunately Mr. Grand senior was not a wealthy man. As times grew worse and his family larger, he found it necessary to send George François to England as an apprentice to a Mr. Robert Jones, of Clement's Lane, London, in order that the youth might learn to become a British merchant.

Finely dressed in laced and embroidered clothes, a sword by his side and a *chapeau bras* on his curled and pig-tailed head, young Grand arrived in London. Such refinement did not please Mr. Jones, who forthwith had

the lad's pigtail cropped and his hair cut close. Instead of his charming clothes, the young Swiss was made to wear a plain English frock and a stupid round hat upon his head. "I do it for your own good," declared gruff Mr. Jones, "so that people might not take you for a French monkey imported on English ground."

What a change from the fine assemblies in Lausanne, to which once he had accompanied his reverend tutor, was this new life in the counting-house! Here he had to clean the room and dust the desks and chairs, tend the fire and run errands about the city streets. Small wonder that his days were spent in unhappiness and disgust and that, at the very first opportunity, he left the premises of Mr. Jones and the uncongenial environs of Clement's Lane. Fortunately for him, an aunt in England took a kindly interest in his welfare. With her assistance he secured a cadetship in Bengal and one fine day, in the company of eleven writers—among them a Mr. William Thackeray who was to become the grandfather of a famous novelist—he set sail for India.

Grand landed at Madras, and from there proceeded to Calcutta, where he was received by Clive. Considering the cadet too youthful to be entrusted with a commission, Clive sent him to join the second brigade. But Mr. Grand was a young man of ambition and determination and very soon received a commission as ensign, signed by the great Clive himself. Seven years later, he gained the rank of captain.

The Indian climate had, however, played havoc with the young captain's health and now, anxious to regain the "soundness of his body," he decided to take a holiday trip to England. Sailings, unfortunately, were few and far between, and he was forced to wait three months in Calcutta for a passage in the *Marquis of Roaringham*. The time passed quickly enough for the young officer, since, as guest of his good friend General Anthony Pollier, he

joined in all the pleasant gaieties of the capital of English Bengal. The new Governor, Mr. Warren Hastings, showed him the greatest friendliness. On many occasions, too, he met that much-discussed couple, the painter Imhoff and his wife. Tongues in Calcutta were wagging about this engaging woman. It was said that the Governor-General was filled with a deep, strong and unconquerable passion for her ; and for once the chattering tongues were right. When at last the *Marquis of Roockingham* set sail from India, Mr. Imhoff was one of Mr. Grand's fellow-travellers. His lady remained behind. The Imhoffs and the Governor had reached an amiable agreement and Mr. Imhoff was on his way to Europe to arrange a divorce, so that Mrs. Imhoff, when matters had been satisfactorily settled, might marry her adoring Mr. Hastings.

Grand reached England safely, to enjoy a well-earned holiday. Then, completely restored to health, he applied for and obtained a writership in the British India Company and once again arrived in Madras. It was at this time, after having been sent by Colonel Maclean to Calcutta with official despatches for the Governor-General, that he met Catherine Noël Werlée.

III

Mr. Grand had many influential friends in Calcutta. With all haste he began to set the machinery in motion which would enable him to overleap the only stumbling-block in the consummation of his "engagement in matrimonial alliance" with the bewitching daughter of the *Capitaine du Port* at Chandernagore.

First he approached his kind friend, Mr. Richard Barwell, who, allied politically with Mr. Hastings, formed the opposition in the Supreme Council of Bengal against that dark-tempered reformer, Mr. Philip Francis. When

informed in detail by Grand of his anxieties and tribulation, Barwell showed himself both understanding and sympathetic. He would be only too delighted to help smooth the lover's rough path. "Indeed, my dear Grand, I am most desirous to alleviate the sufferings of a young couple so ardent to be united," he declared whole-heartedly.

He gave advice—sane, practical advice. It would be politic, he assured Grand, to go directly to the Governor-General and inform him of the whole troublesome position. "Furthermore," declared Barwell, "I assure you, my dear Grand, that whatever Mr. Hastings can devise for your welfare will meet with my hearty concurrence."

Mr. Hastings, the kindest and most generous of men, listened with lively compassion to the plaint of the Honourable Company's writer. Yes, indeed, something had to be done to mitigate the sufferings of a young couple so eager to be united in matrimony. And, declared the Governor-General, he would see that it was done. A position which would have suited Mr. Grand admirably, that of Paymaster to the Garrisons, had just become vacant, but unfortunately it was already promised to another gentleman. And a promise was a promise. However, something was sure to turn up.

And it did. By a process of reshuffling offices Hastings and Barwell managed to obtain for Grand not only the secretaryship of the Salt Committee, but also the position of Head Assistant and Examiner to the Board of Trade's Secretary, Mr. Charles Grant. Between them these two situations insured a monthly income of thirteen hundred rupees, and Grand felt that at last he had the right to claim his lovely Catherine. Monsieur Werlée, her father, now that the material obstacles were overcome, willingly agreed to fix a date for the marriage.

Since Catherine was a Catholic and George a Protestant, it was necessary for their union to be solemnised with two ceremonies. The first, legalised by a priest, was per-

formed in the Roman Catholic parish church of Chander-nagore on the 10th of July in the year 1777, at the extraordinarily irregular hour of one o'clock in the morning. The second, performed by the English chaplain, the Reverend William Johnson, by special licence from the Governor-General, took place seven hours later in a private house at Hooghly, the home of an old Benares friend of the bridegroom, Mr. Thomas Motte, husband of pretty Mary Touchet, the dearest intimate of the one-time Mrs. Imhoff, who had recently become the "Lady Governess."

Mr. Grand's marriage with Mademoiselle Werlée began with the happiest augury, for contrary to the general rule in the society of Bengal, where the prize in most cases went to the highest bidder, Cupid did indeed "wait upon Hymen." Catherine, just three months short of fifteen years of age, loved her humourless and often querulous husband and returned his mature and passionate affection with the simple tenderness of a child. It was, in truth, as Grand declared, a union "blessed with the sincerest reciprocal attachment."

So a new life began for the daughter of Monsieur Pierre Werlée. Mrs. Grand she was now called—Mrs. and not Madame, since Mr. Grand was an Englishman by adoption. Radiantly happy, a loving child-wife clinging trustingly to the arm of her fussy and pompous husband, she entered the gay and brilliant society of Calcutta, in which Mr. Warren Hastings, that courteous and refined first gentleman in British India, played the leading role and Mr. Philip Francis that of the ill-tempered angel of discord in the paradise of Bengal.

BOOK III
LA BELLE INDIENNE

CHAPTER I

CALCUTTA, OFFICIAL CAPITAL OF BRITISH INDIA, SEAT of the governing Council and the Supreme Court, spread itself along the eastern bank of the Hooghly river, tributary of the Ganges. Though the Mahratta Ditch, zigzagging across malarial swamps, marked the limits of the Supreme Council's jurisdiction, the Chilpore Road, running from north to south and cutting off the Lall Bazar from Bow Bazar and Esplanade Row from Durrumballah Street, formed the actual boundary of the European section of the town, of which Tank Square was the hub.

It was a town of Eastern elegance and appallingly unsanitary conditions. The streets were in a wretched condition. Troops of mangy prowling pariah dogs were to be seen everywhere. Myriads of flies bred in open cesspools. Diseased fakirs paraded the town. Hindus carried their naked dead, loosely tied to long bamboo poles, through the streets, and flung the corpses pell-mell into the purifying waters of the Hooghly, where they were left either to rot and infect the stream or to be eaten by scavenging birds and crocodiles. Strewn with the dead bodies of men and beasts the river presented a gruesome spectacle and formed a malignant nursery for all manner of diseases. Even Calcutta's fresh water supply was not free from pollution, but very wisely, in an effort to prevent themselves going down with "a putrid fever or a flux," most Europeans slaked their unquenchable summer

thirsts with mulled claret, Madeira wines and arrack punch.

Yet despite the town's unhygienic condition and a life burdened with more than its share of human suffering and misery, of sickness, blood-letting and blistering, the society into which George François Grand introduced his young wife lived in great style and state. Dwelling-houses were large, rooms spacious and airy, furniture elegant to a degree. The Governor-General had his official residence on Esplanade Row, next to the Council House; Mr. Francis owned a house just behind the Playhouse, and lived there when he was in town; Sir Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice, possessed a fine mansion and a deer park not very far from the Burying Ground, and there were, besides, beautiful residences surrounded by large compounds on Garden Reach and a whole quarter of fashionable homes in Post Office Street.

Calcutta was an opulent town. There was much money to be made and, while little time was occupied by work, a great deal of it was spent on social activities. In the hope of forgetting the cruelties of the Indian climate with all its accompanying ills, people of fashion gave themselves up to gaiety and a ridiculously unsuitable style of living. Almost any and every occasion was considered an excuse for convivial routs and festivities. Banquets were even held to celebrate the conclusion, in October, of the season of death and disease. With much merriment, on these occasions, members of society rejoiced at the fact that they were still above ground and not, like so many of their good friends, four feet below the Indian earth in the Burying Ground near Mission Row.

For people of *ton* in Calcutta, the day began in the early morning with a ride or a walk. At nine o'clock came breakfast, a *dégagé* meal, for which undress was worn. Since this was the time for gentlemen to call quite unconventionally to say the prettiest things, ladies took great

care to look particularly charming in their *négligés*. The hours after breakfast till noon were given over to business and the hairdresser. Robed in white jackets, gentlemen sat leisurely smoking their long-tubed hookas, while they listened in comfort to the latest gossip retailed by their *friseurs*. At home, while her pretty head was being dressed with powder, gauze and flowers, milady chattered amiably or read the latest chit brought by a bearer from a friend. At two o'clock came dinner. Even in the most trying weather this was an enormous meal of endless courses—soup, roast fowl, curries, mutton pies, fore-quarters of lamb, puddings, tarts, fresh-churned butter, cheese, bread and delectable wines. Two glasses were set at every place, one for Madeira, the other for claret and white wines. At the end of the meal, when already a "few loyal healths" had been drunk, the ladies withdrew. But dinner was by no means over. No gentleman dreamt of getting up from the table before he had emptied at least three bottles of red or white wine.

To mitigate the effects of dinner, the afternoon was given up to a long and refreshing siesta. Both sexes, undressing completely, went to bed as if the time were long past midnight. Then, for hours, Calcutta lay in heat and silence. Gentlefolk woke only when the hairdresser came to pay his second call. With deft fingers he retouched sleep-crushed coiffures and set beauty beaming in readiness for sunset, when the streets broke into life again and society, looking cool and elegant, set out on "gentle promenades" along the Esplanade or for drives across the Race Course. Upon returning from these sunset outings, it was customary for ladies to pay short formal and friendly visits to each other, and, after a hasty cup of tea or coffee, to hurry home in order to receive callers themselves.

Gentlemen paid their visits only after the tea hour was over. If asked by their hostess to lay aside their hats

during the call, an invitation to stay for supper was implied. This meal was never served before ten o'clock, but the hours of waiting passed on winged feet, for there was always music and card-playing to fill up the time.

For an evening to end before midnight was considered the height of plebeianism. Night was meant for revelry, and if there was no dancing or music, there was either card-playing or pleasant conversation and hooka-smoking. Gentlemen always took their *bouccabardar* with them wherever they went. It was the duty of this servant to feed the hooka and to keep it burning with his breath. European ladies of fashion occasionally enjoyed a smoke. Indeed, for a lady to desire a puff from a gentleman's hooka was an expression of delicate flattery. Immediately then, according to the rules of politeness and etiquette, the gentleman would place a new mouthpiece into the long tube, or snake, and gallantly present it to her. With shining eyes he would watch her genteel airs as she drew the smoke into her mouth, preening himself the while, for, having paid him so charming a compliment, there was no knowing with what further favours she might yet honour him ! . . .

Catherine Grand played a lively part in the entertainments held in private houses. She attended, too, the balls and formal dinners given by the Burra Sahibs of Calcutta, Mr. Warren Hastings and his colleagues on the Council and the august judges of the Supreme Court. In addition she frequently enjoyed the delights of public masquerades, sat watching while the gentlemen amused themselves at the card tables, and herself played an occasional game of whist. Play at cards ran high in Calcutta and many a fortune was made and lost at five-card loo and whist. On nights of high play, however, ladies were seldom present. These were essentially occasions for stag-parties. The most favoured place for gaming was some fashionable tavern in the town, but, at least once a

week, Mr. Barwell entertained his men friends to dinner and cards at his lodge near Alipore. It was there that George Grand lost large portions of his salary while Mr. Francis, playing with skill and phenomenal luck, often won several hundred pounds a night.

As gay and lavish as its pleasures was the fashionable dress of Calcutta society. Lace, spangles and foil decorated velvet suits and gowns of lustrous silks and brocade. Even the very modes of conveyance spoke of Eastern elegance and opulent riches. The Hooghly budgerows looked every whit as grand as State barges on the Thames; phaetons and carriages, drawn by finely caparisoned horses, glistened with ornamentation; palankeens fantastically curtained and cushioned sedan chairs were carried high on the shoulders of black servants. As they picked their way down the streets, the bearers uttered the strangest of noises. These sounds did not indicate fatigue, but were merely commentaries on the state of the roads. In a strange sing-song they would cry out: "Here's a puddle of water"; "Here's a heap of stones"; "There's a hole," till the air was full of their warnings.

II

But let us look, for a moment, at individual ladies and gentlemen of this brilliant society of Calcutta who, one way or another, are to play a part in the life of Catherine Grand. Shall we go and seek them at the Playhouse or at dinner? Or shall it be at a ball, that ball given in honour of Mr. and Mrs. Wheler, newly arrived from England? Mr. Wheler had come to fill that position on the Supreme Council left vacant by the recent death of the pugnacious General Clavering.

How beautiful Catherine looked that night! She was

like a day in spring. Her hair hung in ringlets upon her shoulders. Her figure, face and gracefulness of carriage presented a combination quite unrivalled even among the handsome ladies of Calcutta.

But see, a gentleman comes to claim her for a dance. It is Mr. Warren Hastings, amiable and unaffected as ever, and as simple in his manner as his dress. As he smiles charmingly at his lovely partner it is difficult to realise how bitterly he is waging war against the vexations of his arduous political life and the machinations of Mr. Philip Francis, his avowed antagonist in the councils of Government.

Now the *cotillon* is over and Mr. Francis himself steps forward to claim a dance from Catherine. Ten years earlier he was called *le bel Anglais* in Paris. In Calcutta his haughty airs have earned him the name of "King Francis the First." He is extraordinarily handsome and extremely well equipped with all the charms most captivating to women. Ladies, even the wives of his political enemies, admire him greatly. . . .

That gentleman dancing with Mrs. Motte is Mr. Barwell, one-time friend of Dr. Samuel Johnson and Boswell, and the Governor-General's staunchest ally in the Council. In all their married life the Grands had no better friend than Richard Barwell. His lady, to whose fascination, when she was the celebrated Miss Sanderson, Grand had fallen in vain, is going down the dance with that friendly-natured man, Sir Robert Chambers; Lady Chambers treads the measure with honest Justice Hyde. And see how the "Lady Governess," with her infantile airs, smiles into the double-chinned face of the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey. For all her ostentation in dress—for she is gowned rather in the manner of a European lady masquerading as an Eastern princess—Mrs. Hastings is an engaging little lady. How bewitchingly her auburn curls tremble in the dance! Lady Impey, stepping out

sedately with Mr. Wheler, draws her mouth into a prim line. Perhaps she is remembering the days when the "Lady Governess" was only the wife of the German painter Imhoff, and how, then, she had often enough made that pretty Marian eat humble pie.

What a furore Mrs. Wheler is creating as she dances in a wide hooped skirt with Mr. Grand! With envy and admiration bright eyes stare at that London gown. Even that gifted musician and prime favourite in society, Mrs. Hyde, who is sitting in a corner with Mr. Shee, Major Palmer, Major Gall and the dwarfish Mr. Ducarel, breaks off in the middle of her animated discourse on the instrumental creations of Bach to praise the elegance of that magnificent hoop. At this moment Mr. Francis bends slightly towards Catherine. "I have never seen the like in all my life," he whispers, and, though of course, his words refer to Mrs. Wheler's hoop, his eyes speak a language which his lips dare not utter.

III

So, for a moment, they danced before our eyes, those ladies and gentlemen of Bengal society, a society in which—perhaps because of the dreadful climate or because, like Mr. Francis, many people suffered from "the bile"—there seethed enough malice and gossip to fill a whole continent. Calcutta was a hotbed of social and political intrigue. Not a day passed without some greater or lesser scandal. Always Lady Impey was, metaphorically, at the throat of Mrs. Hyde, and Mr. Francis, quite literally, at the throat of Mr. Hastings. The heads of pretty ladies were full of lovers and husbands, and most gentlemen believed, among a great many other things, that "I trust you with my wife, you trust me with yours," was a premier axiom of gallantry.

Into this atmosphere of social brilliance and mixed passions, of political enmity and personal intrigues, George Francois Grand had brought his beautiful child-wife.

IV

For the first ten months of their married life the Grands lived with old Mr. Robert Sanderson, the father-in-law of their good friend, Mr. Richard Barwell. They were, to all outward appearances, an incongruous couple. For George, with a heart full of passion and a tongue devoid of wit, was a heavy-mannered gentleman, while Catherine was all daintiness and lightness. Yet, in spite of the contrast of their personalities, they were absurdly happy together, living in a seventh heaven of joy.

Whole-heartedly Catherine entered into the fascinating game of being Mrs. Grand of Calcutta for, despite her society graces and accomplishments, she was little more than a naïve and playful child. Viewing the world through rose-coloured glasses, it seemed to her that never before had there lived a person so happy as she now was. Everything in her new life delighted her, particularly her own dear George, who, completely under the spell of her beauty, frequently wondered whether indeed she could possibly be a real live girl and not, as he often imagined, some nymph transported straight into his arms from the sylvan glades of Arcady !

Ravished by her pretty and caressing ways he found it difficult to deny her anything. She looked so enchanting when she coaxed and pleaded, so appealing when, under her dark brows, her blue eyes filled with tears. Not even that ridiculous whim of hers, to visit the teeming native bazaars in the early freshness of the morning, could he refuse to gratify. True, he did argue strongly against it for a while, scolding her a little and explaining grandilo-

quently that since there were enough European shops to satisfy anyone's craving, people of *ton* did not visit such places in Calcutta. For answer she merely looked at him beseechingly, climbed on his knee, pressed her cheek against his face and whispered endearing words into his ears. Such tender pleading no man could withstand. In the end, then, he not only took her to the native bazaars one early morning, but once there, bought her innumerable gifts—Arab dainties, Turkish sweetmeats and a Cashmere shawl that a Bengalese salesman praised in words of poetry. And strange to relate, George Grand found himself enjoying every moment of this escapade. Was not Catherine walking at his side? It gave him a sensual satisfaction to watch her fingers caressing the texture of English broadcloths, Persian brocades and fine silks from Benares and Moorshedabad. He smiled amusedly when she went into pretty ecstasies over some trifling beads from the Coromandel Coast or a jewel from Bundelcund. Nothing escaped her eyes. She reacted physically to everything. Even her little tip-tilted nose seemed to quiver with excitement as she sniffed the odour of spices from the Straits and stooped to smell the fragrance of myrrh and frankincense from Ceylon.

What pleasures they enjoyed together those first months of their marriage! Many a night they dined at one or other of the fine houses on Garden Reach or Alipore. They went to the Playhouse and at each fall of the curtain Catherine clapped her hands with the delight of a child. What did it matter that, since she knew only a few words of English, she had understood but little of the play itself. She clapped because she was happy. Everything delighted her—the dress and movements of the company of male actors as much as the winking candles in their sconces, the new fashion in which Mrs. Hastings had dressed her hair for the occasion and the splendid jewels displayed by the high-born Indian ladies in their boxes. . . .

Evening was a time that Catherine loved, for then, after the day's heat, the setting sun was the signal for society to "take the air." Frequently she and Mr. Grand joined a budgerow party on the Hooghly. More often still, they set off in a carriage for a drive along the Course, the three-mile race-ground on the tree-studded maidan. Though a dusty evening's airing in dry weather, it was, for all that, a pleasurable one. So many things happened there. One saw all the best people, one bowed to them, one stopped one's carriage for an amiable conversation. Above all, it was there that one heard—or watched the beginnings—of the most exciting scandals. The Course was a veritable field of love. Words, whispered to a lady by an indiscreet beau, as he stood simpering on the footsteps of her chariot, often reached other ears besides her own!

When the Grands did not go up the river or driving on the Course, they walked along the Esplanade or round the formal fish-lake and sweet-water cisterns in Tank Square—that popular resort for social assembly, facing the Old Fort with its tragic memories of the Black Hole. But the Esplanade itself was Catherine's favourite walk. Especially did it enchant her when darkness fell and the link boys, calling their quaint cry of "tok-tok," came running along to meet their masters. In the black Indian night, the moving lights of their flambeaux produced a fairy-like effect that was eerie and yet pleasantly romantic.

But greatest of all her delights was dancing. Such exciting nights those were when George took her to a ball. Daintily she stepped through *cotillons*, minuets and merry country dances. No sooner did the music stop than, like bees around a honey-jar, partners flocked around her, eager for the honour of going down a dance with her. But obediently she observed the rules of etiquette, and gave not more than two dances to any gentleman but her husband. She looked enchanting on these nights of

revelry, with flowers entwined in her hair and her eyes shining as bright as the lights which set fine jewels twinkling.

The music and the dancing ceased only at an hour near the dawn. Then, in a palankeen hoisted on the shoulders of hurrying bearers, Catherine rode back to her home. Sometimes, wide-awake with excitement, she would peep into the quiet night, and sometimes, at the sight of a poor widow being carried off to suttee down the street, she would weep bitterly. But more often than not, when home was reached, she was sound asleep and George had to carry her up the stairs to bed.

She was indeed a most bewitching creature. George Grand was proud of her, and proud too, of the sensation that she had created in society. All fashion tumbled over itself to pay her homage. And Mr. Grand was gratified.

CHAPTER II

I

CATHERINE BECAME THE RAGE IN CALCUTTA, A SOCIAL star in whose orbit swam an assemblage of male satellites. Her grace, her pretty ways, the sweetness of her temper and her smile, formed a theme for conversation in boudoir and tavern alike. True, ever and again, feminine jealousy whispered slyly about her *naïveté* and artless ingenuity. But to such envious tittle-tattle male admiration turned a deaf ear. Her ideas were limited? What did that matter since they hovered so entrancingly over everything? Besides, did not the perfect harmony of such features have far greater potency than the attic salt of womanly wit?

Catherine, reigning queen of loveliness in the Bengal Settlement, was a bundle of pretty caprices. Her figure was that of a nymph. Her complexion suggested the pinky-whiteness of alabaster. When a smile entered her glance, her eyes, limpid pools of blue fringed with long black lashes, shone like stars. A thousand moods lurked in their depths, animating her physiognomy and eloquently betraying the impulses which moved her while she spoke or listened. Her mouth was small with soft red lips that told of gentle sensuality rather than strength of character. Across her face, which ever wore a look of kind and sweet serenity, flitted an endless procession of expressions, now grave, now gay. As crown to all this loveliness, she had a luxuriant head of hair that the goddess Diana herself might

well have envied. Pale gold in colour, it fell in curls about her exquisitely moulded shoulders.

Such were the fetching charms that had ensnared staid and humourless George François Grand and now brought all Calcutta to pay homage at Catherine's feet. Such was the beauty that teased the aggressive heart of Mr. Philip Francis, senior member of the Supreme Council of Bengal, into a fever of love.

II

"Never," declared Mr. Disraeli one day when giving friendly advice to a young Tory, "never in society ask who wrote the *Letters of Junius* or on any account inquire on which side of the Banqueting Hall Charles I was beheaded, or if you do you will be voted as a bore and that is—well, something dreadful."

These *Letters* to which Lord Beaconsfield referred, and which were still being so much discussed in his day, had created a tremendous amount of excitement when, in the reign of George III, they first appeared in the public Press. Signed with various pseudonyms but especially that of Junius, these caustic satirical screeds of political reproof and criticism "shot poisoned barbs at the highest in the land." They were the work of Philip Francis, a brilliant young man employed as clerk in the War Office. But for years their authorship remained a question for dialectical dispute. Indeed, the identity of Junius was still veiled in secrecy when, nominated for a seat in the recently formed Council to the Governor-General of India by Lord North, Francis sailed for Calcutta in the *Ashburnham*. He was accompanied by General Clavering and Colonel Monson, his newly appointed colleagues in the Council, both of whom fell victims to the dire climate within a few brief years,

On the 17th of October, 1774, the three new Councillors landed at Calcutta and set foot on shore at Chandpal Ghat. Though they forbore to make official complaint, they were chagrined from the very moment of landing. Mr. Warren Hastings, who met them, had not donned a ruffled shirt in their honour and their arrival was heralded by a mere seventeen guns instead of the royal salute of twenty-one, which they had expected. In moods of ill-temper the new Councillors repaired to a meeting next day. From that moment Francis began his vexatious quarrels with the Governor-General, quarrels which were to echo in Bengal throughout the six years of his sojourn there, and end only with the unsuccessful impeachment of Hastings years later in England.

Though in no position to judge the many difficulties of Indian administration, Francis burst with terrific enthusiasm for reform upon the Council. Blinded by a prodigious egoism and an excessive belief in his own ability and faculty of mind, he grossly underestimated the genius of his political opponent. With slander and libel and laboured innuendo he strove to undermine the Governor-General's power. But Hastings, vigorous in his wisdom, determinedly withstood the onslaughts of his First Councillor and it took years before the bitter rancour and fiery spirit of Mr. Francis shook his refined urbanity into openly expressed ill-temper.

There were times when a truce was proclaimed between these two men in their struggle for and retention of power. It was a hollow truce always, broken almost as soon as it was made. Francis, for all his brilliance, allowed his political conscience to be completely overshadowed by his personal hatred of the Governor-General. Finally, it was he who had to retire from the Indian stage, in the hope of crowning this failure of his career by instigating, on the grounds of avarice and corruption, the impeachment of

his enemy in England—a long, tragic and, in the end, fruitless impeachment.

“ A serpent bit Francis, that virulent Knight :
What then ? ’Twas the serpent that died of the bite.”

Thus, in an epigram of two lines, Hastings once summed up the character of his bitterest opponent in India. Yet in spite of his dark temper, and his excessively high opinion of himself, Francis was no political adventurer. He was the only man of ability on the Council worthy of the Governor-General’s mettle.

Francis’s closest associates in Calcutta, after death had deprived him of his dearest friend and brother-in-law, Alexander Macrabie, were his cousin Richard Tilghman, the barrister, Gerard Ducarel, the attorney-at-law, and George Shee, writer in the service of the Company. But towards men in general he showed himself both haughty and aloof. Though he joined with the gentlemen of fashion in all the social refreshments of the Settlement, he was on intimate terms with extremely few. Hastings he hated—yet dined with him regularly. With Barwell, whom he despised for being indolent and greedy of gain, he consistently sat down at the card tables. For Impey and Hyde he had a rabid dislike yet, times without number, entertained them and accepted their hospitality. Sir Robert Chambers he was pleased to honour with his friendship and approval, but for George Grand he felt nothing but contempt. Scornfully he referred to him as “ that sordid old Frenchman.” A gross inaccuracy, for whatever else Grand might have been, he was neither old nor a Frenchman.

If unbending in his manner towards men, Philip Francis, however, was charmingly attentive to all women. His manner to them was all refined courtesy, respectful veneration, captivating playfulness and delicately expressed sentiment. While heartily disliking husbands, he was

yet able "to admire beauty and to pay his respects to an agreeable woman, even in the enemy's camp." As a result, he was always on the friendliest terms with Mrs. Hastings, Lady Impey and Mrs. Hyde.

In addition to bestowing upon him a tongue which could drip honeyed words when he desired feminine favours, Nature had further graced him with a tall and handsome figure and features of classical perfection. In every respect she had been profuse in her gifts to him, making a veritable "*l'homme aux bonnes fortunes*" of him. A master of gallantry who had had much success with women, he was by no means silent on the subject of his amorous intrigues. He was as vain of his conquests as of his ability in the spheres of politics and literature.

Early in his life he had married Alexander Macrabie's sister. She was a gentle creature who loved him with deep tenderness and a boundless admiration. Though possessing the estimable qualities which made her a good wife and mother, she lacked the most necessary attributes to make her a successful partner in his public life and overweening ambition. She did not accompany her husband to India. Patiently, in England, she attended to their home and the welfare of their six children and by each packet sent him a long and detailed account of her life and her simple cares and hopes. For this trusting, loving and sweetly credulous woman, Francis, in spite of his many victories in the field of gallantry, ever retained a sincere affection. He called her his "dearest Mrs. Francis" and sometimes, playfully, his "dearest honesty." Upon his arrival in India, and with her image still fresh in his mind, he set down, in his best clerical handwriting, a number of rules for his conduct. One of these, referring to "*affaires de cœur*," boldly counselled discretion. But Fate had other plans in store for him. In time he was to forget all about that neatly penned resolution which lay between the covers of his journal.

III

In consenting to become the wife of George François Grand, Catherine had followed the dictates of her heart. Unlike most women of her time, she had not allowed her head to play a part in her decision. "I married that I might go to the ball, the opera, the promenade and the play," Madame d'Houtetot confided to Diderot. But Catherine had not so callously looked material factors in the face. It was her father who, with Gallic forethought, had made certain that Grand should find himself in a position to offer her at least a fair measure of the vanities and luxuries of life. She had married her suitor because she loved him dearly. In an age which held up its hands in horror at over-fidelity after the nuptial sacrament, she was still in love with her husband months after their marriage.

For young Mrs. Grand life in Calcutta appeared in two phases only—pleasure and ennui. The affection and approbation of her husband and the many social gaieties of the Settlement formed her whole world. She was happy, not with the sophisticated happiness of a woman, but with the joy of a child playing in a room full of pretty toys. She was just sixteen and neither clever nor affected with studied wit. Indeed, Catherine was never one to "wag a green tongue," as the saying went. But she was sweet and cunningly mischievous and full of intriguing fancies. To George François Grand who, above all else, desired beauty, lightness and agreeability in women, she was completely satisfying.

So, too, Philip Francis found her. Thirty-eight years old, a man of the world and of unlimited experience in love, he succumbed like a fledgling youth to her incom-

parable loveliness and the bewitching allure of her naïve and childlike charms. When first, at routs and balls and assemblies, he signalled her out for attention, she was overawed by the favour conferred upon her. George Grand, too, felt inordinately proud of her ability to attract so mighty a man. Avaricious and ambitious, it suited him to be on friendly terms with the senior member of the Supreme Council. One never could tell to what material benefits such an association might lead. . . . Not that he actually used Catherine as a direct lever for his ambition. Still, it was pleasing to contemplate that the honour with which she was treated by Mr. Francis indirectly placed him on the debit side of that gentleman's good books.

George Grand loved his wife. Implicitly he believed in her faithfulness to him. And quite rightly so. She was honest and sincere in her affection for him and met the Senior Councillor's blandishments with playful reserve. Mistress of fashionable flirtation, she tantalised him with her glance, yet kept him at a distance. But with each meeting Francis grew more and more enamoured of her pretty ways, and with the well-trained artillery of his gallantry laid siege to her heart. Unaware of the rising tide of his passion, Catherine piped a merry tune to which he, biding his time, danced patiently, though his soul was racked with desire. As his ardour grew in vehemence his tactics changed. Playfulness gave way to the subtle arts of enticement. He began to soothe her youthful conceits and vanities with "soft words and pleasing outward show." He excited, intrigued and flattered her. Timidly, at first, she listened to his gentle innuendos and then more boldly, for his tender courtesies fed her self-esteem and filled her with naïve pride. For all that, she did not take him seriously. To her this was a pleasant pastime, a fashionable game of social coquetry. She was childishly delighted to have, as opponent in this

amiable recreation, so august a personage as Mr. Philip Francis. Laughter played happily in her eyes as, blissfully, through the iron bars of her fidelity to her husband, she kept on "teasing a tiger in mistake for a cat."

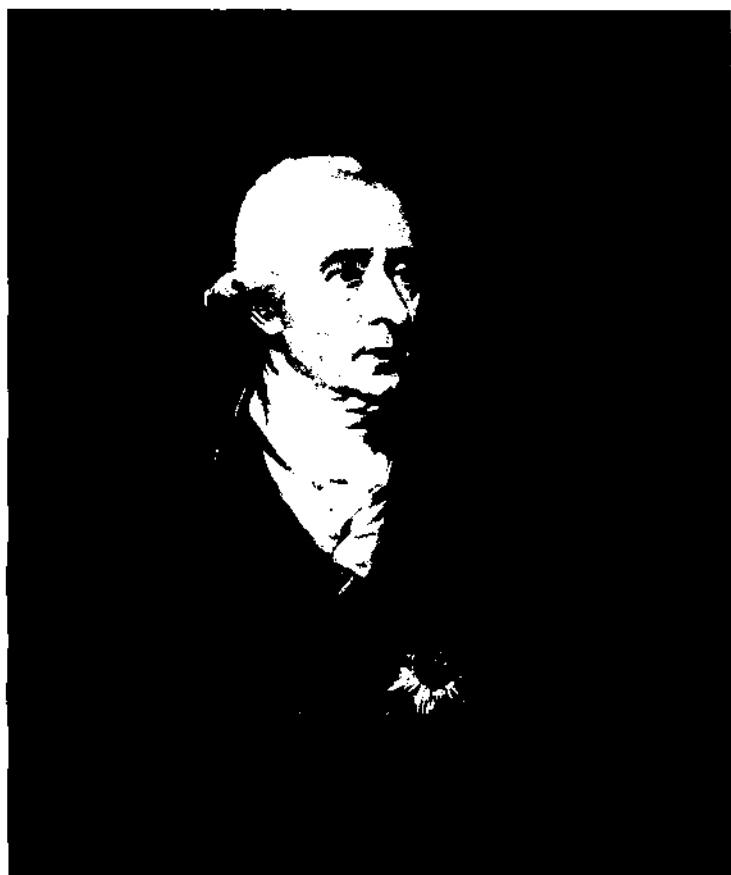
CHAPTER III

I

MARCH OF THE YEAR 1778 HERALDED THE ARRIVAL of boisterous north-west winds which, while cooling the air, levelled verandahs to the ground. In April, with the storms still unabated and after a residence of ten months in the home of old Mr. Robert Sanderson, Grand took Catherine to Chandernagore on a visit to her sister, Marie de Calnois, wife of the Chief Notary Public at the French Settlement. It was a short visit but a gay and highly pleasurable one, and on their return to Calcutta the Grands, for the first time, went to live in a home of their own, a garden-house situated in a bower of trees a short distance from the town, in Alipore Lane.

Alipore was a fashionable suburb. Here, in a forest glade, stood Belvedere, the favourite residence of the Governor-General. Marching with Mr. Hastings's compounds were the noble acres of Mr. Barwell's mansion, and not far away, in even larger and finer grounds than those which surrounded Belvedere, stood the Lodge belonging to Philip Francis.

Mr. Grand, though ill-luck dogged him at the card tables, had been prospering during the last ten months, and his garden-house, with its rich red walls contrasting charmingly with the dark green of the surrounding foliage and vegetation, was a large and airy dwelling. On the lower floor there was a fine hall divided by columns, for supper parties and balls. Doors, covered with green



SIR PHILIP FRANCIS

By Lonsdale.

venetian blinds, led from it on to a large enclosed verandah. The sleeping apartments were upstairs. Mr. and Mrs. Grand's own private suites consisted of a large bed-chamber, with mosquito-enshrouded cots, and two dressing-rooms. The inner walls and the staircase were covered with chunam, a species of oyster shell which, burnt and pounded and mixed with water, formed a cement that looked almost as beautiful as marble. The whole house was lit by candles under glass shades. The furniture was Chinese in design and very elegant, and in almost every room stood vases of heavily scented flowers and bowls of perfume.

For the upkeep of so luxurious a home the Grands employed a large staff of servants, all neatly dressed in white muslin jackets, white turbans, loose-gartered trousers, and gay sashes. The jemadar, or house steward, was the head of the staff. Under his control were chamber, table and sideboard servants, a man for cleaning the shoes, another who saw to the cooling of the wines, and, in addition, a doorkeeper, a *houccabardar*, flambeaux-bearers, palankeen-bearers and kittysol boys. A kittysol boy always accompanied Grand when he walked through the street, for it was the duty of this servant to carry an enormous paper and bamboo umbrella over his master's head to keep off the sun's rays. Other kittysol boys were employed indoors, their duty being to keep the air cool by continually waving large fans of palm leaves. As her own personal maid Catherine had a pleasant, elderly ayah named Anna Lagoorda, a voracious chewer of betel-nut who could chatter most amusingly while she helped her mistress dress.

Sometimes, in the mornings before breakfast, Catherine went for a quiet promenade with her husband. Occasionally, too, in a palankeen, she set out on a shopping expedition to the European shops. These were the fashionable rendezvous of the idle and the gay, for here, while bargaining for all manner of dainty fripperies, one exchanged

the latest tit-bits of gossip. More often, however, since by nature she was indolent and incredibly indisposed to activity during the early part of the day, she spent the hours before breakfast lazily amusing herself with her pets. She had quite a collection of tame animals and pretty birds. Her favourites were a rose-ringed parakeet with the most entertaining antics and a squirrel with beady impertinent eyes that would climb on her shoulder and peer inquisitively into her face.

At last came breakfast and the time when, robed with careless perfection in the white muslin draperies of a *négligé*, with a fancy cap on her head and her curls falling about her shoulders, Catherine received morning callers. Mr. Barwell came often, so did Mr. Ducarel and Mr. George Shee and Mr. Farrar, all of them, even at this unconventional hour of the day, eager to pay the prettiest tributes imaginable to the most beautiful woman in Calcutta. But her most frequent visitor was Mr. Philip Francis.

II

Full of passion Francis lavished compliments upon lovely Mrs. Grand. He never seemed to tire of repeating his eulogies of her numberless graces and unequalled perfections. With shining eyes and cheeks suffused with blushes she listened to his praises. Laughingly she vowed that she would have to stop her ears. But this she never did. It pleased her childish heart to be so much admired and, like a little dove, she sat preening herself before the mirror of his flattery.

Her gaiety fascinated him. Her fidelity to her husband astounded and enraged him. At last, the vehemence of his ardour outstripping his sagacity, he threw all caution to the winds and grew bold and plain in his meaning and

his speech. At this her lips set in a half-angry, half-frightened line. A frown puckered her white brow. With both hands she tried to stem the tide of his eager, breathless love-making. In her heart she carried a tender feeling for him and it grieved her to be so cruel. But, strange as it might have seemed to Mr. Francis, she loved her husband and with unshakable resolution rejected the First Councillor's entreaties.

Now he fell to agitated pleading. Too long with indirect words and silent meaningful looks had he cajoled and worshipped from afar. His patience was exhausted. His desire to become her successful lover could brook no further delay. With fiery eloquence he hammered on the barriers of her restraint. Yet still she remained adamant.

III

With his mind fixed on the power and glory of wealth, George Grand went about his daily duties, quite oblivious of the drama that was being enacted almost under his very nose. His sight was, no doubt, a little impaired these days by the fog of his debts of honour. Ever an indefatigable gambler, he had recently plunged into high play at the card tables, with, alas, very indifferent success. Money was in his blood. In the hope of retrieving his losses, he spent many evenings of the week gaming at some tavern in town or at the house of Mr. Barwell, his neighbour, in Alipore. On such occasions he left Catherine alone, to amuse herself as best she could by reading or chattering with her ayah. . . .

So the months slipped by, and to Calcutta again came the deadly season of heat and disease. Influenza raged; mosquitoes brought their burden of malaria; mysterious fevers took their hideous toll. The undertakers were busy

and doctors, fighting death with physic, blistering and blood-letting, went hurrying in their palankeens from house to house, at a charge of one gold mohur for every visit. It was this season of misery and universal sorrow which carried poor Mrs. Wheeler to her grave after but seven months of residence in Calcutta, and brought the untimely death of that accomplished and lively lady, Mrs. Richard Barwell. Deeply and sincerely mourned, she was laid to rest in the South Park Street Burying Ground, Calcutta's Père Lachaise. With her passing Catherine lost a kind and generous friend.

A gloom hung over the Settlement. Francis wrote to Sir John Day in Madras: "I hate the thought, for my part, of dying of the spleen like a rat in a hole. If I had given way to it heretofore I should now have been stretched alongside of Clavering and Monson with a damned *big* *jacet* upon my heart. I have many reasons for not wishing to die in Bengal." The First Councillor was in a mood of deepest depression. The gloom of his present state of mind was caused, however, neither by the untimely death of Mr. Barwell's wife nor entirely by the miseries of the climate. Catherine was principally to blame for it. Her tenacious and determined refusals to surrender to his desires had thrown him into this all-consuming fever of despair.

CHAPTER IV

I

FOR THREE LONG YEARS THE AMERICAN COLONIES HAD been waging their War of Independence against England and now, in 1778, France, anxious to pit her strength against her old enemy, decided to throw in her lot with them. No sooner did this news reach British India than troops were immediately sent to capture Chandernagore, the headquarters of French administrative power in Bengal. Monsieur Pierre Werlée, the old Capitaine du Port and Catherine's father, was taken prisoner of war. Fortunately for him, for he was in very bad health, his legs being swollen to such an enormous size that he could scarcely walk fifty yards, he was not immured in the Calcutta Jail. Influential friends in the British Settlement, inspired by Catherine and George Grand, intervened on his behalf, and he was allowed to proceed to Balasore on parole. Monsieur de Calnois, his son-in-law, was equally generously treated, and was granted permission to remain at Chandernagore and to retain his office as Notary Public.

As prisoner to Calcutta, however, came gallant Monsieur Chevalier, but Mr. Hastings, ever a generous opponent and remembering how often he had enjoyed the hospitality of Ghyretti House, soon allowed the French Governor to return to France by a Danish ship. Francis and his ardent supporter, Wheler, were greatly incensed by this noble-hearted gesture and a fierce quarrel ensued in the Council Chamber. The wordy battle, however, did not prevent

Francis from inviting the Governor-General to a great ball which took place at his Lodge at Alipore on the 23rd of November. On that night Philip Francis played host at one of the outstanding social events of the season. To his spacious Lodge, illuminated by scores of candles under glass shades, came all the rich, the gay and the fair of the Settlement, glittering with gold and silver lace and shimmering with silks and precious stones. Mrs. Hastings, conspicuously dressed as usual and covered with splendid ornaments, arrived with the Governor-General; Lady Impey accompanied the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah. Sir Robert and Lady Chambers, Mr. and Mrs. Hyde, Major Palmer and Major Gall, Mr. George Shee, Mr. Gerard Ducarel, and Mr. and Mrs. George François Grand—they were all there. And a host of other guests besides, young ladies in search of husbands; married ladies anxious for lovers; artillery officers in full uniform; young subalterns; affluent merchants and a fair sprinkling of writers in the service of John Company.

The hall was splendidly decorated, the music ravishing. Wit flew from tongue to tongue and laughter filled the air. . . . Suddenly the band struck up an elegant quadrille, and ladies were led out to dance in order of their social position. The quadrille passed through its many phases—*chassez à la droite*, turn your partner, *glissez*, back to back. The rustle of silken gowns whispered like a breeze playing among autumn's fallen leaves. . . . Then the music stopped, but soon it began again with the jolly lilt of a country dance. . . . Dancing continued until midnight, when a grand supper was served, a supper of many tasty foods—soups and huge turkeys, geese, hams and beefs, legs of pickled pork and curries, puddings, jellies, wines and beers. A host of servants, as much as two to each guest, were in attendance. Kittysol boys stood behind each chair, moving great palm-leaf fans back and forth in an attempt to cool the stifling air. . . . No sooner was

supper over when, with renewed vigour, dancing began again and, till the small hours of the morning, the band played on through its repertoire of reels and *cotillons*, of country dances, graceful waltzes, and dignified quadrilles.

All through that gay and brilliant night, Philip Francis, in stolen moments, whispered his love into the ears of Catherine Grand. He was drunk with desire for her, and she, all smiles and blushes, had grown a little drunk, too, with the wine of his pleadings and his flattery. Soft languishing looks she gave him, tender, tantalising, glances that only served further to torment his heart. Eyes, slyly watching, were quick to notice the marked attention which he showered on her that night. But George Grand, living in the smug satisfaction of his fool's paradise of ownership, went on gaily and clumsily treading endless measures.

The evening's entertainment drew to a close. In twos and threes the guests departed. At last they were all gone and Philip Francis stood alone in his great hall. Restlessly he paced the empty floor of the ballroom. He was on tenterhooks. This game with Catherine was getting on his nerves. He was suffering acutely, for never before had he desired a woman as he now desired her. . . . So serene she was. . . . How much longer must he coax and implore and grovel at her feet! . . . Exquisite Catherine. She was divine! . . . Pox take her, but what was it that made her withstand his vehemence with such spirit? Was it virtue or principles? Bah, she was a woman first and so much moral excellence and chastity was unbelievable. . . . Unbelievable? . . . Yet, had she not this very night soothed the fever of his desire with languishing glances from her melting eyes?

Suddenly Philip Francis stood quite still. His brow was wrinkled in deep thought. He was breathing rapidly. Then, in a flash, the expression of his whole face changed. His eyes softened. A smile played upon his lips.

Slowly he climbed the staircase to his dressing-room. He opened his journal. In his neat, careful copyist's handwriting he wrote down the date—November 24th. After a moment's hesitation he set down beside it three Latin words: "*Omnia vincit amor*"—love overcomes all things. His eyes were shining triumphantly. He had thought of a plan.

II

With great secrecy, during the days that followed, Francis busied himself with the perfecting of his schemes. He was a diplomat and diplomatically he gathered and marshalled a number of useful facts. . . . Grand was frequently absent from home in the evenings, supping and gaming either at Barwell's Lodge or at some club in town. On these occasions Mrs. Grand remained at home alone; at least, alone in the sense that she received no company. But the house and compound bristled with servants. The doorkeeper locked the front door and kept the key on his person. On the night of December 7th, Mr. and Mrs. Grand were going to a ball. The following evening Grand was going out alone, to sup with Mr. Le Gallais and a host of male friends at a club in town.

Francis had all these facts at his finger-tips and, like a good chess-player, carefully thought out his moves. One man only did he take into his confidence—George Shee, his closest friend in Calcutta. At first Shee was definitely opposed to the whole project. He tried his best to dissuade his friend. The planned escapade seemed to him extremely impolitic. But Francis, in a fever of impatience and desire, spurned all common-sense arguments and in the end Shee capitulated. It was to his house, situated near that of Mr. Ducarel's and not far from Grand's, that Francis brought a dark suit and a black coat, for such garments

"made one less liable to be seen at night." It was in his compound, too, that a native carpenter constructed a stout bamboo ladder for Francis, rung by rung. . . .

At about ten o'clock on the evening of the 8th December, Philip Francis arrived at Shee's house. He came quite alone, unaccompanied even by palankeen-bearers. When a little while later, he left the house again, he was dressed in deepest black. He was carrying the bamboo ladder across his shoulder.

For some minutes after he had gone, George Shee sat brooding in his chair. Then a great restlessness took possession of him. What if Mr. Grand suddenly came home at an unexpectedly early hour? The consequences to his friend would be horrible, horrible and dangerous. Francis must be protected at all costs. Racked with worry and anxiety, Shee slipped out of his house and was swallowed up by the shadows of the night.

III

George François Grand left his home in an extraordinarily good mood soon after nine o'clock that night. As he swayed along the Alipore Road in his palankeen on his way to spend convivial hours with his friends in town, he felt pleasantly contented. He had done rather well for himself, he mused. Life was treating him kindly. He was very proud of the social footing which he had gained in Calcutta, and there was every indication, too, that, quite soon, there would be a substantial improvement in his material state. What more could a man desire? . . . Catherine. . . . For a moment he thought happily of Catherine. He was indeed fortunate in possessing so virtuous and beautiful a wife.

Left alone to amuse herself as best she could, Catherine

sat upstairs in her house chatting to her ayah. At ten o'clock, Anna Lagoorda said : " Will Madame not undress and go to bed now ? "

" No," said Catherine, pouting like a little girl. " No, Nana-jee, I am not tired. Mr. Grand will be back at eleven o'clock and until that time I shall sit up."

For a little while longer they talked together. Then the ayah asked leave of her mistress to go and fetch some betel-nut. As she was going down the stairs Catherine called from the open door of her room : " Nana-jee, please fetch a whole candle."

A quarter of an hour later Anna Lagoorda came upstairs again, carrying her betel-nut and a whole candle. When she tried to enter her mistress's room, however, she found that the door was locked. " Madame," she called, " Madame, it is I, Nana-jee." She received no reply.

Thinking that her mistress was either frightened or angry because she had stayed away for a quarter of an hour, she hurried downstairs to seek the advice of one of the other servants. To Meerun's room she went—Meerun, one of the table-servants—and told him what had taken place. They stood talking for a while and then Meerun went out into the compound. Suddenly his eyes fell on a ladder, a bamboo ladder which stood against the wall. Now what was that thing doing there against the wall at this time of night ? he wondered. He called the jemadar, the chief of the servants. The jemadar, too, was greatly perplexed by that mysterious ladder—so were all the household, who now gathered round to examine it.

At this moment Philip Francis came out of the house. " Give me the ladder," he said.

" What business have you here ? " asked the jemadar sharply.

" Give me the ladder," Francis repeated. " Don't you know me ? "

"I do," came the prompt reply. "You are Mr. Francis."

"Yes, I am the Burra Sahib. Now give me the ladder and I will give you money." Invitingly Francis jingled the coins in his pocket. "I will give you money and make you great men," he added.

The jemadar remained obdurate. "My master is not at home and what have you come to do here?" he demanded. With that he and his assistants seized the First Councillor. "Run with all haste to our master and acquaint him with what has taken place," cried the jemadar to a messenger, while his companions were endeavouring to carry Francis into the house by force. "Run! Run!"

Francis struggled valiantly for a time, then, feeling himself powerless, he put his fingers to his mouth and whistled several times, shrilly and piercingly.

Only with infinite trouble and after a breathless tussle did the servants at last manage to get him into the house. Roughly they forced him into a chair. When he looked up he saw Catherine standing at the top of the staircase. She held a lighted candle in her hand. Tears were streaming down her face. "What have you done!" she cried. "What have you done!" Then: "Jemadar, let him go," she called.

The jemadar eyed her sternly. "Madame," he answered, "I will not hear you. I have already sent a messenger to acquaint my master with what has happened here to-night."

Catherine fell to pleading, but the jemadar remained unmoved.

"It is of no avail, my dear," Francis said at last. "I beg you to go to your room." She turned away. She was weeping silently, like a heartbroken child.

Meanwhile at the sound of those shrill whistles that had echoed through the night, George Shee had rushed across to Mr. Ducarel's house, crying loudly: "Francis is being murdered in Grand's house. Come along, there

is no time to lose." Out of his bed jumped dwarfish Ducarel. Loudly he called to his friend, Mr. Shore, who slept in a room close by. Without stopping to dress, these two gentlemen followed Shee, Ducarel lumbering along on his short fat legs, brandishing his sword. Across the road they went and over the compound wall they scrambled. Noisily they burst into the hall where, guarded by a small band of servants and with the jemadar holding him down in a chair, sat Philip Francis. And in this instant confusion became confounded. . . .

But what of Mr. Grand? In the middle of a dinner which he was enjoying enormously, he was told the news that Francis had been caught in his house. At the messenger's ominous words he leapt from the table like a stone shot from a sling. Full of vengeance and misery, he rushed to the home of Major Palmer, borrowed that gentleman's sword and, requesting his good friend to accompany him, hastened with all speed to the red-brick house in Alipore Lane. But, alas, when, followed closely by Major Palmer, he rushed into the hall of his house sword in hand, there was no First Councillor to be seen anywhere. During the heated *mêlée*, and in the darkness and general disorder which had ensued on the arrival of his rescuers, Francis had made good his escape. In the chair so recently occupied by the First Councillor, sat George Shee, forcefully being held down as hostage by the faithful jemadar. Around him, entreating for his release, stood Ducarel and Shore and two other gentlemen, Mr. Keeble and Mr. Archdekin, who had been attracted by the disturbance.

Explanations followed; the jemadar told his story; Shee was released. Almost immediately afterwards, beside himself with sorrow, anger and self-pity, and determinedly refusing to see Catherine, George Grand left his own house to spend the remaining hours of that dread and fateful night in town with his friend, Major Palmer.

IV

Francis had got safely home. Before preparing for bed, he seated himself at his writing-bureau to jot down the happenings of the day in his journal. First he wrote the date. It was December 8th. Then followed a few lines concerning his public affairs. Finally, with the single forceful sentence: "At night the *diable à quatre* at the house of G. F. Grand, Esqr.," he concluded the entry.

The devil to pay. A neat way for Francis to sum up a situation which for Catherine was nothing short of tragedy. Up in her room, in the red-brick garden-house, her head pillowed on her folded arms, she sat weeping piteously. Unspeakable sorrow filled her heart. To think that her dear George should have gone off without so much as a word to her! It was unbelievable! Without so much as a word! Oh, indeed, indeed, she understood his anger. It was just and right. If only he had allowed her to explain. She had been foolish and indiscreet. But she was innocent—innocent of everything but vanity and coquetry. . . . She had possessed not even the slightest knowledge of Francis's visit. He had crept upon her unexpectedly, like a thief. She had been afraid at first. Then courage had come to her. With angry words she had repulsed and rejected his violent pleadings and, in deep mortification, he had left her. . . . If only her dear George would let her explain. Then surely, since he loved her, he would understand and forgive her. . . . Before her tear-dimmed eyes passed visions of the happy times she had spent with her husband. She was helpless in her misery. Her brain, her whole being, felt numbed and chilled.

As if she were a tiny child, her ayah undressed her and helped her into her cot. There, in a torpor of

misery, she lay motionless. At last, utterly wearied, she fell asleep.

George Grand did not sleep that night. Bowed down with grief he sat in a chair in Major Palmer's house, awaiting the morning. At the first sign of dawn he sent a note of challenge to the "undoer of his happiness."

"SIR [he wrote],

"The steps you took to dishonour me last night bind me to demand that satisfaction which is alone open to me. If, notwithstanding your unprincipled character, you have yet one spark of honour left, you will not refuse me a meeting to-morrow morning. The time, place and weapons I leave to your choice and will acquaint you that I shall bring with me a second.

"I am, Sir,

"Your humble servant,

"G. F. GRAND."

Impatiently he awaited the reply to his demand. At last it came; a short laconic note.

"SIR,

"You are certainly under some gross deception, which I am unable to account for. Having never injured you, I know not for what reason I should give you satisfaction. I must, therefore, decline your request and am,

"Sir,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"P. FRANCIS."

Thrown completely off his balance by this arrogant missive, Grand raved and fumed. He was quite beyond himself in the violence of his passion. At last he grew calm again. Francis had impudently refused to grant him

satisfaction according to a gentleman's code of honour. Very well then, he would take his grievance to a court of law. He would justify himself in the eyes of established authority. As for Francis, he would ruin that gay Lothario morally, socially, politically and financially. Financially? That word set up a new train of thought. George François Grand's blood once again stirred in his veins. Suddenly, though bowed down with grief by the tragedy which had shattered his domestic bliss, he saw that it was possible for even the darkest cloud to have a silver lining. Straightway then, he went about the business of setting legal machinery in motion. On a plea of trespass and "the loss of the help, solace, affection, comfort and council of his wife," he instructed his attorney to sue Philip Francis for prodigious damages. Meanwhile, too, having sent post-haste for his sister- and brother-in-law, Monsieur and Madame de Calnois, to come to Calcutta, he returned to his own home to await their arrival. Still he refused to see Catherine. While he occupied the lower rooms of the house, he insisted upon her remaining in the upper portion.

Grand managed his affairs with the prudence and discretion of a skilled politician, for, quite firmly, he had made up his mind to heal the wounds of his deep affliction with several lacs of rupees from the coffers of Mr. Philip Francis.

V

The de Calnois arrived. In her room, in the upper part of the house, Catherine told them her story. In the hall downstairs, George told his. Catherine had broken his heart, he declared miserably. He was shattered in mind and body. She had ruined his social position and his office. He could never again live with her as his wife. Indeed he would not even remain under the same roof

with her. They must take her back with them to Chander-nagore, to live in their home and under their protection. Fate had dealt him a dastardly blow. Nevertheless he was prepared to show himself generous to Catherine. He would "contribute what was requisite for her support," and this, over and above "the monthly allowance which he chose to allot to her own disposal." So he sealed Catherine's destiny. Before sending her from his home, however, but only after pitiful entreaties, he granted her an interview. It lasted three hours.

Simply she told him the unvarnished truth of her associations with Philip Francis and of the arts which he had used to force her to surrender her chastity. She confessed to coquetry and to the flattery which had touched her heart as a result of the august First Councillor's gallantry and attention. That he had ever been her successful lover or that she had been a party to his nocturnal visit, she emphatically denied. She wept and pleaded. "I implore you to believe me, George," she entreated, clinging to his hands. "I am innocent. Oh, my dear, if you would only believe me!"

It would have been easy enough to succumb to her pleading, but George Grand stood firm as a rock. He was bursting with righteous indignation, and deliberately he thrust all that was dear and sacred to him behind the barriers of his injured self-esteem and his blind contempt. "It is useless, Catherine," he retorted bitterly. "I no longer trust you."

"Have you no pity for my sufferings?" she beseeched. "Will you not try to understand? I love you, George. Only you. You are my dear, dear husband."

He looked at her sternly, she whom once he had regarded with such tender affection, and answered coldly: "Our love has been wounded unto death. All these poignant lamentations are useless. Utterly useless, madam." She stared at him miserably, with pain in her eyes. She felt

as if she were choking. Her hands went up to her throat. "But I forgive you and pity you from my heart," he added pompously. "From the depths of my heart."

So, "with a sorrow approaching to distraction," as Mr. Grand wrote in his *Narrative* years later, they parted. Catherine went to live with Marie de Calnois, her sister, at Chandernagore.

CHAPTER V

I

THE EVENTS OF THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 8TH DID NOT long remain private property. Very soon a hurricane of gossip and tittle-tattle swept Calcutta, creating a great stir in every boudoir, drawing-room and tavern in the Settlement. Nothing else was talked about. Those who hated Francis attacked him bitterly. The prudes loudly cried out their support for injured Mr. Grand. But a great proportion of the inhabitants—particularly the male element—sympathised with Catherine, the much-tempted and misunderstood child-wife, eating out her heart in Chandernagore. She was more sinned against than sinning, they averred. One could feel only compassion and pity for her. Some of the gilded youth even went so far as to dub Grand a "thoroughly odious fellow," while Francis they almost invariably dressed in the character of the Evil Seducer of Innocence.

Hastings and Barwell immediately sent the complete story of the outrage to the Court of Directors in England. Fortunately for Francis, he was warned of this in time and was able to write direct to Lord North himself before the Governor-General's papers left India, a stroke of luck for Francis and one that placed him at a great advantage. He was furious with the Governor-General and Barwell, and in a sense quite justifiably so, for neither of these gentlemen was in a position to throw stones at lapses of moral rectitude. Hastings, for several years before she

became his wife, had lived with Mrs. Imhoff, and in Calcutta's memory Barwell's "*affaire galante*" with Sarah Bonner was still remarkably green. In Mr. Wheeler's behaviour, however, Francis found great consolation. Most handsomely, in the midst of the clamours of the Settlement, did Wheeler conduct himself towards his friend and political colleague. Deeply, too, was Philip Francis touched by his wife's understanding. In a letter which, in matter, style and literary composition was a positive feat of genius, he told her of his "platonical" regard for Catherine. For Mrs. Grand, he declared, his feelings were purely that of friendship and of deep sympathy for a beautiful child married to an "ugly old sordid Frenchman." Mrs. Francis, simple and credulous, miraculously believed him. . . .

At dinners, balls and on the Race Course, Calcutta gossips chattered on. Through the swirling mass of sympathy and censure flowed a swift river of witticisms. A popular *jeu de mots*, one among the many that were being bandied about, was this, composed and circulated in the clubs by Colonel Ironside :

"Psha ! What a fuss, twixt *Shce* and twixt her !
What abuse of a dear little creature,
A *Grand* and a mighty affair to be sure,
Just to give a light *Philip* (fillip) to nature.
How can you, ye prudes, blame a luscious young
wench,
Who so fond is of love and romances,
Whose customs and manners are *tout à fait* French,
For admiring whatever from *France-is* ! . . ."

Meanwhile, with but little delay, the machinery of the law had been set in motion. Grand succeeded in persuading his solicitor to bring an action against the First Councillor and put his case with Mr. Newman. Francis,

served with the writ, placed his defence in the hands of his close friend and cousin, Richard Tilghman.

But now there occurred a most unfortunate hitch in the proceedings. Grand's chief witness, George Shee, on whose evidence, as the plaintiff declared, "every hope of crimination rested," could not be found. The case kept on coming before the Court and again and again had to be postponed because of Shee's non-appearance. That gentleman, on the advice of his "good patron," Mr. Philip Francis, had gone into hiding. He was nowhere to be found—though he was, in fact, at Purnea. Eventually, however, it was deemed advisable for him to return to Calcutta and the case was at last brought before the Supreme Court.

II

The Court House that day was packed with fashionable Calcutta society. With breathless expectation the arrival of the judges was awaited. At last they came, marching in solemn process—the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, at the head, robed in red, followed by Sir Robert Chambers and Mr. Justice Hyde. In a loud voice the marshal of the court called out the nature of the proceedings: "George François Grand, Esq., in the Company's services, *versus* Philip Francis, Esq., Councillor of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal. . . . An action for criminal conversation of the wife of the plaintiff, etc. . . . The damages alleged to be fifteen hundred thousand *sicra* rupees."

The trial had commenced.

For two months it passed through its various stages. At the end of that time the only substantial facts proved against Francis were that he had frequently visited Grand's house and that, on the night of December 8th, he had deliberately gone there knowing full well that the master

was absent from home. Trespass was conclusively proved on the testimony of Shee, Ducarel and Grand's servants. On no evidence, however, was criminal intercourse established. "The evidence," declared Sir Robert Chambers, "appears to me to fall short of what is ordinarily considered as proof of any fact and especially of any crime," and, therefore, since no criminality had been proved, he was fully of the opinion that the charge in the suit had failed.

Mr. Justice Hyde, suffering from moral righteousness and staunchly opposed to any form of "gallantry in the bedchamber," determinedly held the opinion that damages of one hundred thousand *sicca* rupees should be given to the plaintiff.

Finally, on the 6th day of March, the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, rose to pronounce judgment. It was true, declared his Lordship, that adultery had not been proved, but since the plaintiff had been grievously wronged by the defendant entering his wife's apartments at night and thus destroying her reputation, judgment was for the plaintiff with compensating damages of fifty thousand *sicca* rupees.

"Fifty thousand *sicca* rupees," his Lordship added with fine elaboration, "are equal to five thousand one hundred and nine pounds, two shillings and eleven pence sterling, reckoning according to the weight and fineness of the silver."

That night, with a single line in his diary, Francis recorded his defeat. "March 6: Judgment against me in the Supreme Court." He had lost a great sum of money and a good deal of prestige. But he still had the tender trust and affection of his wife in distant England and his desire for the woman he had so deeply wronged in India was as ardent and pressing as ever. . . .

With Francis's rupees in his pocket and having signed his name to a paper declaring himself "fully satisfied,

contented and paid," Grand looked round for new worlds to conquer. A week after his victory in the Supreme Court, he filed an action for trespass and housebreaking against George Shee. This time, alas, the fruits of conquest were bitterly disappointing! Judgment was pronounced for "one rupee damages and one rupee costs."

III

The Grand-Francis *cause célèbre*, more than ever embittered Francis against Hastings, Impey and Hyde. Though outwardly he maintained friendly social relations with them, inwardly his whole being was afire with angry resentment. He talked with them at the Harmonic Tavern, he dined with Mr. and Mrs. Hastings, he entertained them at his house, and frequented the home of the Chief Justice. But while, in public, he was professing so great a respect for Sir Elijah, in private he was intriguing to displace him from office in favour of Sir Robert Chambers, who was his friend, politically as well as socially. Chambers, he considered, had shown himself to be "a wise and upright judge" during the trial. Not like Hyde with his fulsome moral self-righteousness. For Hyde he felt particular enmity and, during the ensuing year, diligently but secretly strove to get him removed from the Bench of the Supreme Court.

Francis could be a very good friend. He was, however, a much better hater. The seeds of his resentment against the Governor-General and the Chief Justice, sown when first he arrived in India, were fostered by the Grand case. Years later, they bore their fruits when he influenced the impeachment of both Hastings and Impey before the House of Lords in England.

It was none too pleasant for self-important Mr. Grand,

that Philip Francis still retained his high position in the Supreme Council. In addition, too, Calcutta's sympathies were, on the whole very definitely anti-Grand, for though he had not entirely ruined his wife's reputation by taking his domestic troubles to a court of law, it was held that he had most abominably and unmercifully played with her fair name. Under these circumstances kind friends advised him to "change the air," and quite suddenly he discovered that "his health had been sensibly affected" by the trials and tribulations and sorrows of the past months. With the aid of influential intimates—Mr. Hastings and Mr. Barwell were still kindly disposed towards him—he secured the position of Head Commercial Assistant to the Indigo Factory at Patna. To Patna, then, he went, just a month after his victory in the Supreme Court. Scarcely had the noise of his departure died down, when Francis, with "thoughts full of matters amatory," made his first trip up the river to Chandernagore.

CHAPTER VI

TO CATHERINE, SO FULL OF DESIRE FOR HAPPINESS, for love and gaiety, the shock of being rejected and forsaken by her dear George, for whom she had felt the tenderest affection, was unbearable and soul-shattering. During the first weeks after her return to Chandernagore with her sister Marie, she abandoned herself unrestrainedly to tears and heartache. It seemed to her as if all the loveliness had faded for ever out of her life. Then suddenly a fresh bewilderment shook her out of her black despair. News had come from Calcutta that Grand was determined to take the whole dreadful affair to a court of law. Hither and thither, like the pendulum of a clock, swung Catherine's strained feelings. It was unbelievable that George should wish to hurt her even more deeply than he had already done, and day by day the confusion of her mind waxed till it fermented into a boiling anger and resentment.

But at last the case ended, and with its termination her emotions gradually cooled down, leaving her nothing but a feeling of utter weariness. Life, she felt, had passed her by. At this time Catherine was just seventeen. Caprice and weakness had made her the type of woman created solely for happiness. Believing herself, now, for ever divorced from the joys she cherished, she gave herself up completely to devastating ennui.

But if George François Grand had spurned and rejected her,

she was forgotten neither by the world of Calcutta nor by Philip Francis. All through the months before and during the trial Francis's longing for her remained unallayed. And it was her oval face framed in its pale gold curls, her soft sensuous mouth, her blue eyes dark-lashed and velvety, her countless charms and pretty ways that drew him up the river to Chandernagore. The power of her spell on him was as intense as ever. On seeing her again, he made this cryptic entry in his diary: "*Ut vidi, ut perii*"—as I saw, so I died. . . .

Once again he resumed his romantic courtship, his eloquent pleadings and his blandishments. But Catherine, numbed by her sufferings of the past months, refused to listen to his passionate entreaties. In his diary he bemoaned her coldness in short Latin, French and Italian quotations. "*O cara Phyllide, rendi me il cor,*" he wrote at Chandernagore in August. By her resolute rejection of his suit she was breaking his heart.

Philip Francis, however, was determined to have his way. If he could not conquer her with passion, he would win her by gentleness. The more she checked him, the more solicitously tender did he become in his ardent persuasion. On visit upon visit he poured the phial of his eloquence into her ears, till at last it seemed to him that he did read in her eyes the faintest glimmer of response.

By warming her chilled heart and soothing her injured vanity his flattery was doing its work. Soon she was no longer able to resist the strength of his romantic love-making. Her listlessness gave place to playful tenderness. Then, one day, as he stood smiling down at her, he seemed suddenly handsomer than ever she had imagined, and very great indeed. Looking into his eyes she found herself swayed now by sentiment, now by ambition. He had so much to offer her—gaiety and comfort and happiness. Power he had too, power to lift her out of the gloom of

hopeless ennui. He could give her all that her heart desired, all that she most passionately longed to possess. . . . His face was close to hers ; his voice, low and intense, whispered dear, touching words into her ear. A wonderful tenderness for him crept into her heart. She lifted soft eyes to his. When his lips sought hers she did not turn away her head.

That day at Chandernagore, Catherine Grand, who for three long months had withstood the eloquence of Philip Francis's love-making, finally consented to pass into his "protection." He promised her all the delights for which she yearned—riches, love and comfort. In return she gave him, gladly and willingly, the gay affection of her youth and her incomparable beauty.

II

It will be remembered that, on his arrival in Calcutta, Francis had carefully noted down in his journal a number of "Hints for my Own Conduct." In all there were seventeen of these acutely judicious guiding principles to discreet behaviour. Number twelve, beginning: "If certain connections be formed, to keep at a distance," obviously referred to just such an intrigue as this with Catherine. Unfortunately, with the years, the cry of this axiom had grown rather weak. Francis, hearing it now only as a faintly whispered admonition, interpreted it in a manner best suited to his present mood and the desire which prompted him to offer his "protection" to the neglected and rejected wife of George François Grand. Recognising the wisdom of not transgressing beyond certain bounds of public propriety of conduct, he did not, however, take Catherine under his own roof. His home in Calcutta, situated behind the Playhouse,

retained for the time being at any rate, its purely bachelor character. So did the Lodge at Alipore, which he sold a few months later for 30,000 rupees. It was at Hooghly, a mile or two beyond Chinsurah, which again was above Chandernagore, that he established Catherine in the elegant modern villa belonging to his cousin, Major Phil Baggs.

Major Baggs had but recently arrived in India. His actual landing at Calcutta had taken place on the very day of the escapade at Grand's house. He was a grim-countenanced gentleman with but little appeal for the fair sex. His notoriety rested on his amazing duelling prowess and his pursuits at the gaming-tables. Francis, realising with good justification that he could find no better watchdog for his enchanting Catherine than this fire-eating Irishman, sent her to live at Major Baggs's villa at Hooghly, and, ostensibly, under that gentleman's pugnacious chaperonage.

Though discretion decreed that the First Councillor should not attend Mrs. Grand "abroad," he saw to it that she was neither isolated in her retreat nor banished from the delights of fashionable society. Sir Robert and Lady Chambers and Mr. Wheler, the very cream of Calcutta *bon-ton*, were frequent visitors at Hooghly. Their openly expressed 'friendship imbued the liaison with the virtues of respectability. Indeed, since in a sense the Hooghly villa had become his home, Francis did most of his entertaining there and at regular intervals all his friends came up the river to dinner, ball or rout.

To Calcutta Francis went only for the urgent business of Council meetings. No sooner was this accomplished when, with all haste, he hurried back to the charms of his adorable Catherine who, in the milk-white villa, awaited his return with the utmost impatience. For the First Councillor, the ablest as well as the most fiery of men in public life, the house at Hooghly became a haven

of peace. Here he tried to forget his quarrels with Hastings and, throwing aside the cares of his political position, became the eloquent lover, all amiability and honeyed charm. On Catherine he lavished the passion and tenderness of his ardent disposition. He spoilt and adored her and showered her with gifts. Though mentally she was no match for a man of his brilliance, her *naïvetés* filled him with delight. She never bored him for an instant. To him she was ever an intriguing and exciting combination of woman, dryad, child and toy. She was his sweet Egeria ; he her Ægis, protector and lover.

Those were days of lotus-eating for Catherine. She was queen of a beautiful idyll, and played her part contentedly and happily. So gay she was, so tender and endearing, small wonder then that Francis found her the sweetest anodyne for allaying the stress of his embittered public life. Whenever, on his return from Calcutta, she came to welcome him, gowned in flowered silk with knots of blue ribbon on her shoulders to match the colour of her eyes, all dimpling smiles and little fluttering caresses, she appeared to him the very embodiment of Euphrosyne, loveliest and merriest of the Three Graces. It seemed to him that never would he grow tired of looking at her. Whether she sat playing with her pets or gravely sewing at her embroidery, she was always enchanting to watch. But best of all he liked those evenings they spent alone together, when she, indolently reclining on a couch, prattled happy as a child, while he sat beside her smoking his long-tubed hooka. Often in years to come, he remembered these hours with Catherine, spent in the peace and contentment of a room filled with the scent of tuberose, of Indian stocks and oleanders in tall vases.

During all this last half of the year 1779, Francis's trips up the river from Calcutta were numerous and frequent. His diary is full of references to the glorious days passed at the Hooghly paradise, where he stayed as

long as he could, visiting Calcutta only when absolutely necessary, for the purpose of attending Council meetings. In his new-found happiness, there was little room in his memory for a romantic image of his good and faithful wife in England. Bitterly she felt his neglect. "I was but too sure separation would make a great alteration in your affection, and indeed I am sorry to say, I fear it has—a very great one indeed," she wrote pathetically in a letter to him at this time. Francis was assailed by sharp twinges of conscience on receipt of this communication and immediately, from Hooghly, wrote to his "dearest Mrs. Francis," to reassure her of his husbandly affection. He sent her, too, as a token of his respect and esteem, the gift of a magnificent pair of pearl earrings.

The Hooghly heaven had been in existence for just six months when, suddenly, the Court of Directors of the Honourable Company decided that the presence of the fire-eating Major Baggs in Bengal was most undesirable. They ordered his instant departure. In Mr. Hicky's *Bengal Gazette*, the first newspaper to be published in British India, the following advertisement was inserted soon after the paper first appeared on January 29th, 1780: "For Sale, an elegant modern built house at Hooghly, lately inhabited by Major Baggs."

With the watchdog of his paradise so summarily despatched from India, Francis decided to take Catherine to Calcutta. He established her under the chaperonage of Lady Chambers, a "species of chaperonage" which gave the stamp of social approval to his association with her.

III

Politically the Settlement was in a mild mood. Differences between the Senior Councillor and the Governor-

General had been bridged over by a truce, and Francis had promised his support to Hastings in the war which, at this time, he was waging against the Mahrattas near the Malabar Coast.

During this interim of harmony Mr. Barwell, whose vote up to now had given the Governor-General a predominating position in the Council, decided to return to England. He felt quite easy in his mind at the thought of leaving India, for Francis had pledged his faith to Hastings, and the Government for once was running on oiled wheels. On the 17th of February he called at Francis's house in town to pay his respects to Catherine. Of this and that they talked, and so, at last, he discovered that, tentatively, she had been toying with the idea of going to live in France with some of her father's relations. Indeed, said Mr. Barwell. Well, why not secure a passage in the *Swallow*, the ship which was taking him to England within a few short weeks? This gallant suggestion met with Philip Francis's flat refusal. He had an intense dislike of Mr. Barwell and had not the slightest intention of exposing his pretty Catherine to the blandishments of a man whom he considered grossly profligate, depraved and cunning. The very thought of her in the same ship as Barwell sent a shudder through his being. One might as well deliberately coop a sheep and a wolf together in the same pen. Besides, there would be time enough to decide Catherine's fate if ever he should find it impossible further to continue the tenure of his office on the Council of Bengal. Meantime she must stay in India and under his "protection."

A fortnight later Barwell called again—"to take his leave with a fine palavering speech," Mr. Francis noted down in his diary that night, in open contempt of his departing colleague.

But no sooner was Barwell gone than the snake of discord once again raised its head in the Council Chamber.

Not only did Francis reopen his attack on the power of the Governor-General with renewed vigour, but now, too, he suddenly and most vehemently opposed the conduct of the Mahratta war to which, before Barwell's departure, he had promised his support. Matters political came to a head in August as the direct result of a minute penned by Hastings and sent to Francis on the night before a Council meeting. Though no doubt justifiable, Mr. Hastings's minute was provocative in the extreme. "I did hope," ran one paragraph of the document, "that the intimation conveyed in my last minute would have awakened in Mr. Francis's breast, if it were susceptible to such sensations, a consciousness of the faithless part which he was acting towards me." And "my authority of the opinions I have declared concerning Mr. Francis," stated another portion, "depends on facts which have passed within my knowledge. I judge of his public conduct by my experience of his private, which I have found void of truth and honour. . . ." To such assertions there could be but one answer from Francis, an answer which Hastings expected and for which he was fully prepared.

Hastings had carried the ideas of this challenging minute in his mind for some weeks, but as Francis was in bed with fever, he had decided to wait for the First Councillor's recovery before handing him the accusing document. Meanwhile, clearly foreseeing the possible consequences, he had arranged for his "dearest Marian" to be safely out of the way. On the 4th of August, therefore, he had gone up the river to Sooksagur with the "Lady Governess" and, on his return to Calcutta ten days later, persuaded her to remain on at Chinsurah as guest of the Governor's wife. On the very night of his arrival he sent the provocative minute to Francis, who had completely recovered from his recent indisposition. Colonel Watson, Chief Engineer at Fort William, a gentleman bitterly opposed to the

Governor-General, happened to be dining with the First Councillor on the following evening, and agreed to act as his second. Mr. Hastings secured Colonel Pearse, Commandant of Artillery, to perform the same service for him, and a meeting was arranged for the early morning of August 17th.

CHAPTER VII

I

ONE OUTSIDE SPECTATOR ONLY WAS FORTUNATE enough to see the most famous duel ever fought in India. An old Hindu woman, passing on her way that early morning, stopped to watch the strange behaviour of the four white sahibs. Uproariously she laughed at what seemed to her the maddest and most diverting game she had ever seen played in the forest glade near Belvedere.

The whole matter was wrapped in such profound secrecy that no one in Calcutta, except the two participants and their seconds, was aware of the encounter which had been fixed to take place near the road opposite Alipore and close to Belvedere. On the night before the duel while Catherine slept in peace, oblivious of the sharp sword of Damocles which hung suspended above her lover's head, Francis spent long hours burning papers, writing letters and setting his private and public business in order.

"I am forced into the field," he confided to Wheler in a short farewell missive, "by such insults as I think no degree of resentment nor any sense of injury, however unjust, will warrant among gentlemen. . . . Defend my memory and leave this country, as soon as you can, to its own Fate. . . . Yours while I still live," he concluded mournfully.

At half-past five the next morning when Hastings and

his second reached the appointed meeting-place, Francis and Watson had already arrived. Viewed at this hour, the spot previously chosen appeared extremely unsuitable. Lying close to the main road along which, in the early morning, riders frequently passed, it was obviously much too open to the public gaze. Unanimously, therefore, it was deemed advisable to select a more sheltered place for the encounter among the trees near the Lodge once occupied by Barwell. Finally a dry and secluded spot was discovered. The pistols were loaded. Pearse handed one to Hastings, and Watson the other to Francis.

"Now, gentlemen," said Colonel Pearse in a business-like tone of voice, "will you kindly fix your distance, for it is the duty of the seconds to pace it off accurately?"

"Distance?" reiterated Francis. "I regret that I am unacquainted with these matters, for I have never fired a pistol in my life."

"And I, sir," Mr. Hastings asserted, "do not recollect having myself ever fired a pistol above once or twice."

"Very well then," interjected the practical Watson, "I recommend fourteen paces."

"Fourteen paces?" retorted Hastings in a sudden bellicose humour. "That seems to me a very great distance for pistols."

"Indeed, sir, no great distance at all, I assure you," declared Colonel Pearse authoritatively.

Sharply Watson interrupted. "Colonel Pearse, since both gentlemen seem unacquainted with the modes usually observed on these occasions, shall we fix the distance at fourteen paces?"

"Agreed," said Pearse with finality.

So while Pearse paced, Watson counted, and when all the preparatory business had been completed the duellists took up their positions and came to the present. Francis raised his hand but almost instantly came down to present

again. Twice again he raised his hand, but each time brought it down. He had discovered, upon attempting to press the trigger, that his powder was damp. Patiently Hastings waited while the misfiring pistol was reloaded and readjusted. Then, for the fourth time, the two gentlemen took up their positions, presented and, almost simultaneously, fired.

With a shrill sigh Francis's bullet hissed past the Governor-General's ear. The next instant his opponent's shot had found its mark, entering his side just below the right shoulder and lodging in the opposite side under the left. As Francis staggered and fell to the ground Hastings and Watson rushed towards him and Pearse hurried off to call the servants and to fetch a sheet to bind the wound.

His face distorted with pain, the First Councillor whispered hoarsely: "I am a dead man. A dead man."

"Good God! I most sincerely hope not," cried Hastings, frankly distressed. "Watson," he called, "Watson, run with all speed and fetch a cot or palankeen from Belvedere so that we may carry Mr. Francis to town." Then again he turned to the injured man. "Indeed I most earnestly trust all will be well," he declared, "but if anything unfortunate should happen, I shall immediately surrender myself to the sheriff."

At this juncture Pearse returned with the sheet and the Governor-General assisted him in binding up Francis's wound. Scarcely was this done when Watson arrived with a cot. It was decided to carry the wounded man on the cot to Pearse's chariot and to hurry him with all haste to town. But on the way to the vehicle the jolting along the rough path so much distressed Francis, who was in great pain, that he was prevailed upon to allow himself to be carried to Belvedere instead. Hastings and Pearse, meanwhile, set off for Calcutta and immediately on their

arrival there despatched Dr. Campbell, the Surgeon-General of the Presidency and Dr. Francis, the Governor-General's own surgeon, to Belvedere.

The two doctors reached the injured man one and a half hours after he had been wounded. Without delay they cut out the ball lodged under his left shoulder. Later that day they bled him twice. Poor Francis, having fortunately escaped extinction by Hastings's pistol, was now in really grave danger of being put to death by the well-intentioned but perilous treatment of his over-conscientious medical advisers. For several days he suffered greatly from pain and weakness, but miraculously, and in spite of the drastic remedies to which he was subjected, he recovered and a week later was able to return to Calcutta.

The next Council meeting was marked by great civility between the Governor-General and the Senior Councillor. "Both parties behaved as became gentlemen of their high rank and station." Hastings, as he had written and told his beloved Marian, felt in a "state of perfect tranquillity." And no wonder, for once again he had scored a victory over Francis.

Vibrant with excitement, Calcutta searched in vain in the pages of Mr. Hicky's scandalous *Bengal Gazette* for a stirring account of this affair of honour between the two highest personages in the land. For once Mr. Hicky kept a discreet silence. He had too great a respect for Mr. Francis. If only the tables had been turned at that meeting-place near Belvedere, how gladly and how willingly would he have ribalded the Governor-General !

Prior to this duel, Francis had, with some confidence, anticipated the recall of Warren Hastings to England and

his own elevation to the highest position in the Indian service. Guardedly he had communicated his expectations in a letter to his wife. With so much caution did he express himself that, instead of gladdening her heart, he succeeded only in utterly bemazing her mind with doubts and misapprehensions. "Your staying in India one year more is the most dreadful disappointment to me," she answered him. "What can detain you, my dear Philip? Indeed I cannot say as you, it is quite indifferent to me whether you stay or come here; it is not so to me, I can assure you, for all my happiness depends upon my seeing you. I am sorry to find it not so with you."

His cherished hopes, however, were not to be realised. Soon despatches arrived from England confirming Hastings's further tenure of the Governor-Generalship of Bengal, and Francis was left to face the unequivocal fact that his star in India was setting. In the mood of despondency that overwhelmed him during these distressing days, Catherine's natural sweetness of disposition, her serenity and innate indolence, made her a restful companion. Her grace and beauty brought him soothing consolation. Her agreeability to one racked by the stress and storms of a political life, was a veritable balm. She was neither clever enough to ask leading questions nor stupid enough to offer advice. Indeed, in these troublesome days he found her "understanding very great." Out of the deep gratitude which she carried in her heart for him, she showered on him tender consideration and affection and in a hundred pretty ways tried to relieve the dejection of his dark mood. Her attempts to make him happy were innocently artless, and when her gaiety brought a smile to his lips, she was as delighted as a child with her achievement. He was deeply touched by this and by her sympathy.

III

Whatever else may be said against Philip Francis, his desire for India's welfare is unquestionable. The Francis of the Bengal period was no mere political adventurer. Though a virulent and rancorous human being, he was, nevertheless, a brilliantly able statesman and an honest one. It is true that, in his struggle against Warren Hastings, he used every weapon that came to his hands, but it was because he sincerely believed the Government of India to be unprincipled and corrupt that such methods seemed justifiable to him. His honesty of purpose can perhaps best be gauged by these words of ex-Lord Chancellor Brougham, "Francis," he declared, "had been an Indian satrap in the most corrupt times and retired from the barbaric land, the land of pearls and gold, with a fortune so moderate that in the fiercest storms of faction no man ever for an instant dreamt of questioning the absolute purity of his administration. . . ."

After the duel with Warren Hastings a lull fell on the political battlefield of Bengal. But widely varying in standard and contrast were the moods of the Governor-General and his Senior Councillor. While Hastings looked forward to his renewed tenure of Government with composure and tranquillity, Francis stared the failure of his Indian career full in the face. For six long years, fighting with every instrument that came to his hand, vilifying the character of the Governor-General, stirring up public hatred against him, provoking disobedience and frustrating authority, he had tried to establish the reforms in which he so ardently believed. It had all been in vain. He could no longer stand up against the power of Warren Hastings nor against his tenacity of purpose. At last, like Macaulay, he came to realise that "all the

fruits of the tropics are not worth a pottle of Covent Garden strawberries and that a lodging up three pairs of stairs in London is better than a palace in a compound of Chowringhee."

He announced his intention of leaving for England to the Council and gently, one day, told Catherine that their Indian idyll was over. "How long is it since first we met, Catherine?" he asked.

"I have been so happy and you have been so good and gracious to me," she answered, "that I have long ago stopped counting the weeks and months."

"You are very sweet," he said tenderly, "sweet and beautiful as a nymph out of some ancient Greek legend." He told her of his plans for her. She would accompany him on the long voyage. He would establish her in France, to which he knew she so ardently desired to go. "So you see, my dear, this is not the end for us," he said. "For surely I mean to return to you. I shall come to see you in Paris, Catherine."

"In Paris? And you will love me still, Philip?"

"I shall always love you," he vowed. "How could my eyes ever behold you with apathy? You have been, and always will be, Venus to me."

But Fate decreed that their plans for leaving India together were to be frustrated. Early in November Francis recorded this, the last entry in his Indian diary: "Discovered at last that it is impossible to go in the Dutch ship, so resolve to take my passage in the *Fox*." It was in the "Dutch ship" that Catherine's passage was booked.

She wept bitterly at the thought of separation from him on the long voyage to Europe. He held her close to his heart, comforting her with soft words, ardent protestations and promises of a speedy reunion. So he coaxed the smiles back into her eyes. Catherine was young and all life lay before her. She was going to France, to Paris! Soon, for so he had promised her, she would once again

see her dear Philip. France, Paris, Philip! How *could* she remain sad for long?

But when the time for parting came, she could not stem her tears. "Think of me kindly," she pleaded. "*Adieu, mon ami! Adieu, adieu.*" . . .

The Dutch ship which, according to a notice in Mr. Hicky's *Bengal Gazette*, "carried home Mrs. Grand," left Diamond Harbour, forty miles down the river from Calcutta, on a December afternoon. A day later, with his cousin Richard Tilghman as fellow-passenger, Philip Francis sailed from India in the *Fox*.

CHAPTER VIII

I

NOT ONCE SINCE THE DAY THAT HE HAD SO SELF-righteously sent her off to Chandernagore with the de Calnois had Mr. Grand seen Catherine. "We remained from that moment like those who, having lived for a time in the height of happiness, have witnessed that happiness suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted by one being cut off never in this world to meet again. . . . We knew the delicacy of each other's sentiments, and never once thought of infringing that line of conduct which such a sense of feeling naturally prescribed," he wrote in his *Narrative* years later. With such noble-sounding phrases he clothed his overweening egotism and self-love. For it was these qualities in his character that had enabled him to abide so determinedly by the "eternal separation" upon which, after mature consideration, he had fixed his thoughts. Small wonder then that Catherine's departure for France did not overmuch ruffle his composure and peace of mind. Pompous and vainglorious as ever, he was much too busy feathering his nest at Patna. But he was by no means satisfied with his material success. Life, he felt, most assuredly held more in store for him than a mere Head Commercial Assistantship to the factory at Patna.

Hardly was Catherine out of India, when he once again, assiduously and industriously, took to scheming for his

material advancement. Indefatigable were his strivings to further his worldly status. With cunning skill he wriggled himself into the notice of the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, insinuated himself into the good graces of the heads of the Government and literally grovelled at the feet of the Governor-General. By these means he eventually succeeded in attaining his desires.

In his own inimitable style and manner Mr. Hicky records Grand's success in his *Bengal Gazette*. "Mr. Grand who has lately been much employed in reading and digesting Milton on divorce," the account states, "will, we hear, in a few days be appointed Collector of Turhoot (*sic*) in the Behar Province." The first part of Mr. Hicky's announcement is pure malicious gossip, for Grand, satisfied with the results of his "eternal separation" from Catherine and with having Francis's *sicca* rupees still in his pocket, was much too engrossed in substantial material promotion to concern himself at this stage with the spiritual freedom of a divorce. The latter portion, however, was correct. Grand had succeeded in getting Mr. Hastings to transfer him to the Behar Provinces as Collector of Revenues and Magistrate at Tirhoot and Hajee pore. Here, for a few years, we shall leave him to enjoy the pleasure of his lands, houses, horses and boats and to live in the comfortable security of a good office and a flourishing private fortune derived from the "manufacture of indigo after the European manner."

II

At four o'clock on an October morning, after a long and tedious and much-delayed voyage of ten months, Philip Francis arrived at Dover. That same night at ten o'clock he entered the front door of his London

house in Harley Street and was received with joyful tears and the tenderest of welcomes by his wife and children.

Though happy in the comfort of his English home, Francis could never free himself from thoughts of India. The anguish of his failure to vanquish Hastings "on his own ground" festered in his mind. At last he had come to the conclusion that there were other fields, beyond the political battlefield of India, in which he might yet fight the power of his old enemy. Diligently he had busied himself with these thoughts during the long voyage home. No sooner did he set foot in England when, determined as ever to have his way, he started on a vehement campaign to embitter the public mind against the Governor-General of Bengal.

The years which followed brought Francis honours, social position, a seat in the House of Commons and a Knighthood, but they brought him, too, the painful realisation that everything connected with his Indian career was doomed to end against the blank wall of baffled bankruptcy. Though he did eventually succeed in getting Warren Hastings impeached by Burke before the House of Lords, the fruits of his labours were failure and disappointment. Small wonder, then, that at the end of that historic trial, these bitter words forced themselves to his lips: "I will never be concerned in impeaching anybody. The impeachment of Mr. Hastings has cured me of that folly. *I was tried and he was acquitted . . .*"

On his return from India, Francis once more took up the threads of his domestic life and showed himself a kind and affectionate father and a courteous and mindful husband. He treated Mrs. Francis with his old, charmingly playful attachment and most sincerely believed that in her he did indeed possess "the best girl in the world," as a wife. But he had not forgotten Catherine—nor ever did.

Neither had she forgotten him, though the months of their separation brought her a strange adventure which exerted curiously far-reaching influences on her life.

III

The Dutch ship which that December day carried Catherine from India, picked her way among the budge-rows, snake-boats, commercial vessels and sloops of war that lay in Diamond Harbour, like a fussy old woman crossing a muddy road. Once clear of the assembled shipping she headed for the open sea with sails fanned by a light breeze.

Wrapped in a long loose cloak Catherine leant upon the taffrail and watched the Indian shore recede. Her thoughts were wild and jumbled like the ever-changing cadences in a symphony by a mad composer. The only harmonious theme in the symphonic confusion was her memory of Francis, his tenderness, his favours that had brought her happiness, and his voice which had always pleased her ears with soft, soothing words. All the excitement of her adventurous trip, of going to Paris, had died in her heart. She felt terribly forlorn, utterly helpless and alone. Heart-ache and self-pity sent the tears pouring down her cheeks. Silently she cried, her tear-blinded eyes straining to catch the last faint outline of the Indian coast etched upon the distant horizon. At last, wearied beyond endurance by the agitation of her mind and her emotions, she sought the privacy of her uncomfortable cabin. . . .

The first lap of Catherine's voyage from Calcutta to the Cape passed uneventfully and on laggard feet. Though a formidable undertaking, its dangers and difficulties were not accentuated either by calms or storms, adverse currents

or disease, pirates or enemy ships prowling the ocean highway. The weeks passed slowly. There were days when the sea was smooth as glass and the breeze so gentle that it carried the ship onward under easy sail. There were nights of ethereal beauty when the moon sailed the cloudless sky like a phantom vessel. With each day Catherine's boredom increased. Beset by ennui, she wished with a positive fervour for some untoward excitement to break the endless monotony of days and nights. She had long since tired of watching the gambollings of schools of dolphin or the leaping flying-fish which blindly banged against the sails and dropped upon the deck.

But at last, with a stiff breeze taking the ship around the southern promontory of Africa, the end of the first lap of the voyage was in sight. One morning land loomed out of the mists and the Cape of Good Hope, like a maiden shyly revealing herself to her lover, came into view. First Lion's Head appeared, beckoning a friendly greeting to the eager travellers standing on the deck of the Dutch ship, then Table Mountain, its rocky face half hidden by a curtain of frothy white clouds. Then, looking no bigger than the lilliputian homes of dolls, low white houses could be seen nestling in the green enbowering vegetation on the mountain slopes.

The Dutch ship remained at the Cape for several days. Fresh water was taken on board and the larders were restocked with vegetables, fruit and meat. While she was being re-provisioned, her passengers explored the settlement which Holland had planted, more than a century before, at the tip of the dark continent of Africa. Catherine wandered about the town and admired the clean square houses with their ornamenting pediments and architraves. She saw prosperous burghers smoking long pipes on their high stoeps, and groups of slaves walking through the streets carrying loads of wood upon their backs. She

drove out to Constantia, where, in the vineyards, heavy bunches of grapes were purpling in the sun.

Then the time came for the Dutch ship to go on her way. Several new passengers embarked on her on the day of sailing, among them a young gentleman in the employment of the Madras establishment of India.

CHAPTER IX

I

A VOYAGE FROM THE CAPE TO EUROPE IN THE YEAR 1781 was a prodigious venture and tedious in the extreme. Small wonder then that the young man from Madras boarded the Dutch ship in a spirit of philosophic stoicism. Yet scarcely had the East Indiaman slipped out of Table Bay when his mood changed, for, on deck one day, he had beheld the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. . . . It was Catherine Grand.

Catherine, too, had looked forward with terror to the interminable days of ennui that lay before her on the long route to Texel. But the acquaintanceship of Thomas Lewin of the Madras Civil Service soon stirred her out of her sadness and depression. So gay and charming was her newly embarked fellow-passenger, that he completely dispelled her loneliness and boredom.

A blood and dandy of his time both in temperament and accomplishments, Lewin was, however, neither a fop nor a fool. Exceptionally capable and endowed with a really brilliant mind, he had at twenty-eight already made a name and fortune for himself in India. Though he had gone out to Madras as a writer, his ability eventually secured him the office of Private Secretary to the Governor. Two months prior to Catherine's departure from Calcutta the President and Council of the Fort of St. George at Madras, fully assured of his courage and discretion, delegated him to carry despatches to the Honourable

Company in England, "relative to the War in the Carnatic," which was then being waged against the ferocious Hyder Ali and his French allies. Since it was essential that he should lose no time in reaching his destination it was arranged that he should sail from Pondicherry on the first available ship. This happened to be His Majesty's sloop-of-war *Nymph*, bound for the Cape of Good Hope. From the Cape it was his intention to proceed on his mission by the first neutral vessel bound for Europe. The news that Holland had joined the maritime powers in the war against England had not yet reached the Cape on his arrival there, and he therefore re-embarked on the Dutch ship in which Catherine was voyaging to Europe, believing it, in all good faith, to be a neutral vessel.

Slight and good-looking, Lewin combined all the best gallantry of fashionable society with true courtesy and grace. He was extremely rich and as liberal with his wealth as with his compliments. A talented musician—he performed with skill on the violin and violoncello—he was, too, a good chess-player, a fine dancer and a gentleman of great amiability and wit. In innumerable ways he commended himself to Catherine's goodwill. So deeply did he ingratiate himself in her favour that very soon the voyage which had, for both of them, begun with apprehension, developed into an interlude of happiness and delight.

Then one day as the Dutch ship ploughed her way across the Atlantic with the shores of Europe close at hand, she was waylaid by two French ships of war. Willynilly they changed the East Indiaman's course and carried her into Cadiz Bay. Fortunately Lewin managed to destroy his compromising despatches in time and, through his cabin window, had the satisfaction of watching them sink beneath the deep oblivion of the ocean. Arriving at Cadiz uncompromised by diplomatic papers, he soon secured permission to proceed on his way. The thought,

however, of leaving Catherine behind was unbearable and he begged her to throw in her lot with him. There was no withstanding Thomas Lewin's winning ways. Catherine, weak and tender-hearted, surrendered to his entreaties and together, one fine day, they left Cadiz for Lisbon, where they boarded a Portuguese ship bound for London.

II

To pronounce censure on Catherine for this, her second resignation to temptation, would be easy indeed. But before condemning her, let us remember the extenuating circumstances in her case. She was at this time, it is well to bear in mind, just eighteen. She was beautiful and capricious. She loved the good things of life—riches, fine clothes, enjoyment and the spice and flavour of romantic love-making. Besides which, she had neither the character necessary to withstand the lack of essential creature comforts nor the temperament suited to fight the horrors of boredom. Her pleasures were primarily of the senses, yet she was neither voluptuous, carnal, nor depraved. Life for her had to be all *amourettes* and enjoyment or it was not worth living. Affection and admiration were as necessary to her as eating and drinking. And all these joys Thomas Lewin gave her with surpassing liberality. His gallant praises fell like music on her ears.

Not deliberately did she fall faithless to the memories of the idyllic days with Philip Francis. At first she played her pretty coquetting game with the delightful young man from Madras rather like a child enchanted by a new toy. Then, almost before she was aware of what was happening, the amusing flirtation developed into a sentimental attachment. But though her heart was stirred by Thomas Lewin, who had so miraculously transformed

the terrifyingly tedious voyage into a fantasy, her affection for Philip Francis remained unchanged.

So, perhaps, the worst that can be said of Catherine is that she possessed "all the frailties of womankind" and that, inherently, she was amoral. The best, that she was very young and "blest with as great a beauty as Nature durst bestow."

III

Thomas and Catherine arrived in London in the summer of 1781. The Patriot King, George III, who "gloried in the name of Briton," had been on the throne for twenty-one years; Lord North had been Prime Minister for eleven; the disastrous American War of Independence was drawing to its close; Burke, Fox and Sheridan were girding their loins; society was not so much a question of wealth as of ladies and gentlemen and, like the voice of the turtle, the younger Pitt was making himself heard in the land.

The young couple set up house together in Russell Place, Fitzroy Square, and entered with zest into all the gaieties and diversions which London offered them in such profusion. They sauntered along the fragrant, lamp-starred walks of Vauxhall Gardens, made love in the labyrinths, watched the glittering Cascade play and saw Horace Walpole listening to the music-makers in the temple. They went to Ranelagh, to revel in the masquerades held in the gilded Rotunda, and to the Pantheon in the Oxford Road, hung with lamps of green and purple glass, where Dr. Johnson often wandered with Boswell at his heels. On Sunday evenings, they attended fashion's latest amusement, the promenade, held in Mrs. Cornelys's magnificent suite of rooms in Soho, where the highest in the land rubbed shoulders with pretty little milliners of humblest origin.

Thomas spent his money extravagantly on entertainments and amusements. He dressed with perfect taste in satins of the latest hues, and swaggered down the Mall with the best of the *haut-ton*, a tasselled cane dangling from his wrist. He went to Rymer for his boots and Wagner for his hats. He attired Catherine in fine hooped gowns, glittering with silver lace, gave her charming gifts, fans and trinkets and jewellery, and introduced her to the dashing bloods of the town. But women of his own class she did not meet. My lady of high society, though finding it perfectly natural for a young man of fashion to practise and understand the art of mistresses, saw to it that he kept the game within the limits of well-defined rules.

For Catherine, this summer in England passed with much gaiety and excitement. Then, having tasted all its pleasures, Thomas Lewin suddenly wearied of London. Paris was calling him. In September, just a month before Philip Francis arrived at Dover, he departed for the French capital, taking Catherine with him to the land of her heart's desire

BOOK IV
THE YEARS BETWEEN

CHAPTER I

ALREADY THERE WERE MEN IN FRANCE, IN THE YEAR 1782, who dreamt that the millennium was close at hand. Though the profoundly ignorant masses, desperately occupied with the problem of existing under the most crushing poverty, took no interest in these dreams, the intelligentsia filled itself with the teachings of Voltaire and Jean Jacques Rousseau. The King and Queen, busily occupied with their own amusements, gave little thought to wayward imagery. The virtuous, irresolute and unfortunate Louis XVI sat on the throne in the attitude of his mighty forebears. But his tongue was unattuned to the language of despotic sovereignty. He preferred the thrill of the hunting field and the art of the smithy to the intricate machinations of state affairs. Marie Antoinette, his Queen, heedlessly extravagant, and with no capacity for statecraft, gave herself up whole-heartedly to the joys of the pretty rococo kingdom which she had established at the Trianon, and neglected the Court of Versailles. It was a hazardous thing to do. An idle, disregarded Court is always dangerous, and dangerously now it began to beguile away its unoccupied hours. Fashionable society, however, thought of nothing but itself. Following the Queen's lead, it danced in orgiastic folly on the brilliantly illuminated stage of Paris, little dreaming that the dark curtain in the background was so soon to rise on the terrors of the Revolution.

There was much wit and gaiety in the Paris of 1782 among people of *ton*. Their manners were perfect on the surface and grossly obscene below it. They possessed little character. Virtue and modesty "hung by a button." Vice was considered a "gentlemanly foible," provided it was practised in the right manner. Men of fashion preferred not to marry. Marriage was an institution suitable only for the poor and the middle class. It was a burden to the rich. Mistresses were the mode and, though "men were eager to possess and women anxious to captivate," love, according to the dictates of prevailing fashion, had to be bought. Novelty was the all-important recommendation. Anything and everything that was new and unusual was considered exciting—new books, new dishes, new actors and actresses, a new opera, a new hair-dresser or a new amour. Extravagant nothings were uttered in the most effusive language. National events were but passing topics of conversation. The burning questions of the day were fashions, scandals, love intrigues, the rise and fall of stocks and shares, and whether the curtain at the Opéra would rise at the appointed time. Clothes were brilliant, flamboyant and unusual. Ladies' gowns were enormous in proportion, their heads so bejewelled and beribboned that only with the greatest difficulty could they squeeze into a carriage. Gentlemen swaggered down the dirty streets in silks and satins and velvets of gorgeous colouring, their hats tucked under their arms for fear of disarranging their wigs. Superciliously they quizzed the common herd about them, sniffing their contempt of it out of elaborately ornamented snuff-boxes in the fervid belief that the world had been created solely for their pleasure.

II

On to this stage set so lavishly for levity and frivolity, Thomas Lewin led Catherine Grand, little more than a child and, despite her experience of life, far from being a woman of the world. Unhesitatingly she accepted the spirit of the times and eagerly joined the bright and lively company that danced and wined and played at love with so much ardour and abandon on the very brink of the Revolution. The extravagant modes of society intoxicated her. Light, carefree and avid for admiration, she loved enjoyment, beautiful clothes, jewels, lively company, the fragrance of fashionable coquetry and all the good things of the world. Life for her, at the moment, held no other significance than pleasure. And because she possessed neither particular intelligence nor great strength of character, ennui was her greatest terror. But Thomas Lewin saw to it that she never suffered boredom. Her beauty (which brought astonishment even into the jaded eyes of fashionable Paris), added to his money and social rank, assured her position in frivolous society. In short, it did not take her long to become a puppet in a community of puppets. Lewin proved a kind and generous protector. He gave her all the sweetmeats of life which she so passionately desired—entertainments, amusements, gay company, beautiful clothes and jewels. He even allowed her an account at the jeweller of Monsieur at the Palais-Royal where, in the month of April, her liabilities stood at as high a figure as 4,816 livres.

Let us for a moment picture a day in Catherine Grand's life at this time. She begins the morning by entertaining in her boudoir while she dresses and often while she is still in bed, for, since she goes to bed late, she rises late and frequently has scarcely finished nibbling at her breakfast

before the earliest of her guests arrives. Imagine her, a little later, sitting before her dressing-table, its tall mirror, decked with lace like a high altar, reflecting all the necessary aids to beauty—rouge, perfumes, cosmetics, philtres, creams, ribbons, plumes and tresses. While her hairdresser busies himself with twirling her curls, she receives this one and that, and chatters brightly of bracelets and rings and snuff-boxes, actors and plays and the freshest scandal. When at last she is dressed, she either continues to entertain her guests by picking out the latest air on the clavecin or goes riding in the Bois.

The morning over, she begins to think of dinner. Then, no sooner is this meal ended, when off she sets to shop for the newest laces or trinkets, to visit the most recent and startling sensation, such as a fire or an auction, or to pay a call. At five o'clock, through streets made almost impassable by traffic, she drives to the Gardens of the Tuileries or the Palais-Royal for an hour of promenade, after which she hurries home to dress for the pleasures of the night. While poor people shuffle wearily towards their squalid homes after long hours of toil, she preens herself before the lace-enshrouded mirror in her boudoir. At nine o'clock, "when prostitutes with painted cheeks and breasts uncovered walk the streets," heads tossing and eyes flashing, she drives in a curtained carriage to the theatre or the Opéra. Card parties, concerts, visits, balls and late suppers fill up the rest of the night, and it is only long after the peasants from the country have stacked their store of food in the great market place, the Halle, that at last, most prodigiously fatigued, she finds herself lying between the cool sheets of her finely ornamented bed.

III

Catherine was to prove but an incident in Thomas Lewin's gay life. He had come to Paris, a dandy accustomed to associate with all the young bloods of the period, well armed with a number of introductions to aristocratic families. When the affair with Madame Grand began to lose some of its charm for him, he put these introductions to good use. Such high favours did his enchanting personality win for him among the ladies and gentlemen of the nobility that very soon he began to spend less and less of his time with Catherine and the young bloods of the town. Frequently in these days he joined the Royal hunt at Marly; more often still he was to be seen driving four-in-hand with his aristocratic friends. . . . The romantic interlude with Catherine was over. There were no scenes at the final parting. It was amiable and affectionate and, generous as ever, Lewin settled an annuity on the beautiful girl who, for a few brief months, had given him so much delight.

The break with Lewin left Catherine neither dispirited nor heartbroken. There seemed nothing extraordinary to her in what had happened. They had once meant something to each other, but now the affair had lost its meaning. A charming episode had come to an end.

At this point in her story it is well to glance back for a moment at Catherine's life. She had met and married George François Grand when she was not yet fifteen. To him, gladly and unquestioningly, she had given her virginal beauty and her love. . . . At sixteen Philip Francis had brought her the first taste of despair, yet in the end boredom and vainglory drove her into his arms. His rank, his gallantry and his love had touched her heart with passion and gratitude. . . . Then ennui once again made her

embark on a sentimental interlude with Thomas Lewin, whose enchanting personality and warm-hearted generosity won her affection. . . . Love, passion and affection—each in turn had come into her life, and in the order mentioned, so that for an instant one might almost imagine that already, at twenty, her responses were growing shallower. But this was not so. Gay, flighty, and emotional she certainly was, but she had a middle-class regard for respectability and possessed neither the enterprise nor the cold daring of an adventuress. She was an indolent, impressionable sentimentalist, and boredom was her greatest enemy.

With the Lewin episode at an end, Catherine's mood suddenly changed. Her deep-rooted desire for bourgeois respectability triumphing over her passion for the frivolities of the gay society into which Thomas had initiated her, resulted in her seeking out the commendable companionship of a worthy widowed lady, a relative on her father's side. Francis, with whom she had been in regular correspondence ever since his return to England and who, apparently, had learned nothing of the romantic little play which had begun on the Dutch ship bound for Texel and had ended so soon afterwards in Paris, wrote to a friend in India at this time that his lovely lady was "creditably established in Paris in the society of Madame Vanlée."

A further proof of Catherine's determination to follow the paths of propriety lies in the fact that, having written to Francis of a proposed holiday at Spa, and receiving an answer from him that he would join her there, she replied immediately and firmly that, though she "acknowledged her affection for him and for no one else," she would not on any account renew "the improper part of her intercourse with him." Francis, however, "for the pleasure of seeing her again," made the journey, and, since he travelled from England on several later occasions with the express purpose of visiting her both in Paris and Spa,

her charms, notwithstanding her determination to behave with becoming propriety, obviously still possessed their former attraction for him. Many years afterwards, he praised her in no uncertain manner to the second Mrs. Francis, when he declared in all sincerity that "her understanding was much better than the world allowed; her education had been neglected, but her firmness in returning to the paths of propriety, which was so difficult in her situation, pursued by the man she loved, was a convincing proof of it." . . .

After her friendly reunion with Francis at Spa and when she was twenty-one years of age, Catherine had her portrait painted by one of the most fashionable artists of the day, the talented Madame Vigée Lebrun. As her husband used almost the whole of the richly furnished apartment in the Rue de Cléry as a picture gallery, Madame Lebrun had to content herself with two very simply furnished rooms in which she painted and received the assemblies which gathered there each day. The rooms were always crowded, even when Madame was busy with palette and brush. It was a fashionable, gallant and witty company of ladies and gentlemen that Catherine met while she sat posing for her portrait with so sweet and sentimental an air. In and out of the rooms strolled the elegant visitors, lorgnettes gracefully lifted to appraise first the sitter then the likeness on the artist's easel. If the ladies were sometimes ambiguous in their commendation, the gentlemen assuredly took no pains to hide their preference.

Madame Lebrun depicted her charming sitter in an attitude of graceful repose, seated in a deep arm-chair, her right arm resting on a green velvet cushion, an open letter in her hand. To this day this portrait remains the most enchanting likeness of the "beautiful Indian." She seems lost in thought. Dreams lie in her large soft blue eyes. Her dress, in which blue, white and grey blend and

mingle to form a shimmering texture, is of refined severity with a fichu of white muslin, daintily secured on the bosom by a flowing bow of blue ribbon as its only ornament. Her golden hair falls in curls on her bare neck and is raised high off the forehead to form an aureole of light in which nestles another broad blue bow. Her chin, round and finely chiselled, is slightly raised ; her small nose is delicately tip-tilted ; her lips are parted in a smile which matches the soft languor of her eyes.

All Paris acclaimed it a magnificent portrait. The artist had, in truth, caught the mood and spirit of Catherine Grand, her indolence and freshness, her gentleness and sweet amiability. Yet there were many who dared to say that, vivid as the likeness was, so rare a beauty as that of Madame Grand could never be quite captured on canvas with paint and brush, even by so consummate an artist as Madame Lebrun.

CHAPTER II

PARIS WAS AGOG WITH EXCITEMENT. ALREADY AT AN early hour of the morning the streets were choked with vehicles and pedestrians hurrying onward, ever onward, in the direction of the Tuileries Gardens. From behind the slightly drawn velvet curtains of their equipages courtesans flashed tantalising glances at gentlemen on horseback ; the proud eyes of great ladies looked with haughty disdain at working men and women, dressed in their best clothes, hurrying out of the way of shining carriage wheels ; and Catherine Grand, pale and trembling with excitement, sat in a cab beside Madame Vanlée. It was the 1st of December, 1783, that memorable day on which, from the Gardens of the Tuileries, Monsieur Robert and an intrepid companion were to rise up into the air for the first time in a balloon.

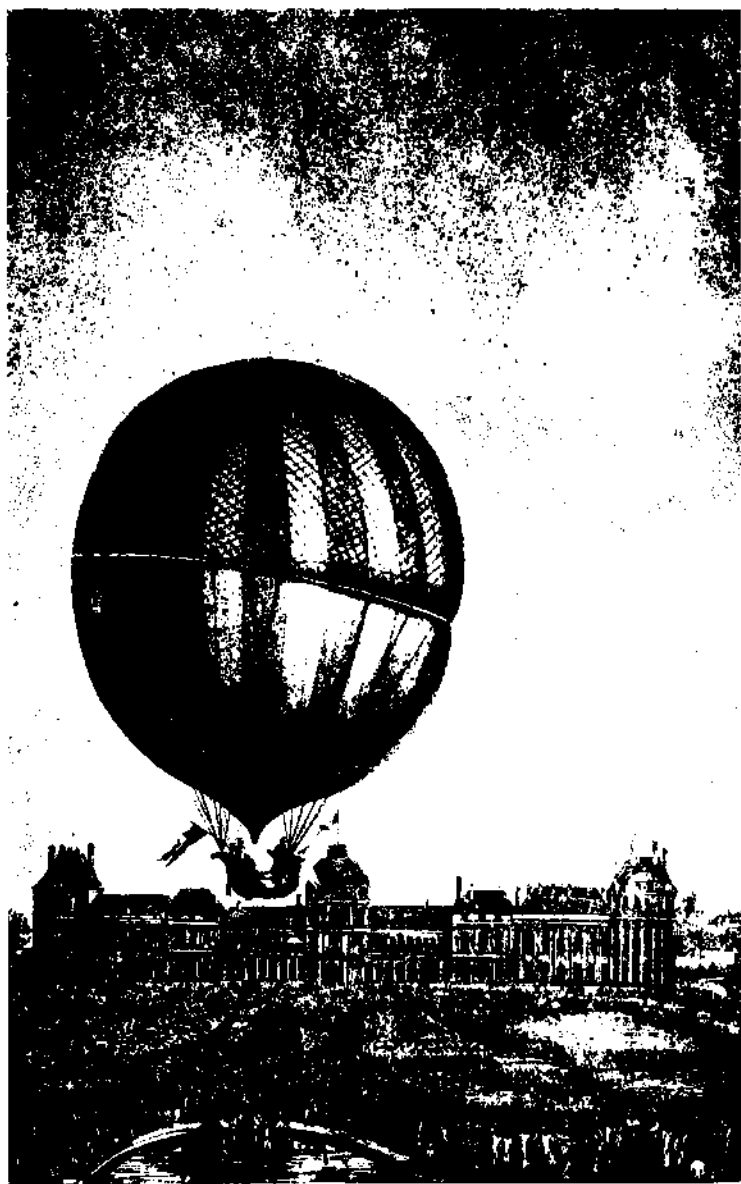
As early as the dawn, the Gardens had begun to fill with a vast and varied crowd of expectant and awed watchers. As the winter sun climbed the sky, the crowd increased till the very gates were forced and the railings torn down. When the moment for the strange and fearful ascent arrived and the daring physicists climbed into their curious machine, a hush fell on the vast conclave. Dear God, what would be the end of this great adventure with Nature and the elements ! The aeronauts faced the crowd. To France, nay to the whole world, they were about to prove that " inflammatory air, or as the knowing ones call it,

gaz," being infinitely lighter than the atmosphere, "if enclosed in a very light machine must rise of itself."

Seconds slipped by. Slowly the balloon rose in the air. Transfixed with emotion the crowd watched in paralysed silence. The envelope of gas began to soar higher and still higher into the sky. Trembling women, swayed by fear and pity for the brave aeronauts, burst into loud weeping and fell upon their knees to pray; men, dumb with awe, stood wide-eyed, hands uplifted in astonishment and admiration. Majestically the balloon sailed above the heads of the crowd. Then, suddenly, as if assured of victory, the aeronauts dipped their flags in salute. In reply a thundering cheer which seemed to make the sky vibrate, rose from the two hundred thousand spectators moved by a strange and fearful emotion in the Gardens of the Tuileries.

Hours later the crowd dispersed. Enraptured, Catherine Grand returned to her home with Madame Vanlée. Tears ran down her cheeks, and her heart was filled to overflowing with joy and awed admiration for those two daring physicists who had that day so nobly conquered air and space. . . .

Four months later she witnessed yet another historical event, the first public performance of Beaumarchais's *The Marriage of Figaro*, a satirical play on matters political and social, which for three years had been banned by the King and the censors because it reviled and inveighed too dangerously against prisons of State and *lettres de cachet*. The prohibition of the play aroused great public curiosity, a curiosity which, fermenting day by day, gave rise to such heated excitement that serious disturbances were only prevented by the eventual promise that the play should be produced. But the King's consent had actually to be wrested from him by deception. Tactfully it was hinted to him that, since the play would unquestionably prove a failure, he could magnanimously soothe the public's inquisitiveness with disappointment and thus gain a



THE BALLOON ASCENT OF DECEMBER 1ST, 1783

moral victory. The ban was removed. Immediately, then, a brilliant cast, which included the celebrated actor Dazincourt, as Figaro, and Mesdemoiselles Contar and Sainval in the rôles of Suzanne and the Countess of Almairva, was assembled and rehearsals began.

So great a crowd assembled for the opening night at the Français, that no carriages could approach anywhere near the theatre. Just before the curtain went up the mob drove away the guard by its rush, and forced in the theatre door. But by this time Catherine was comfortably installed in her curtained box with her cushions and her candles, her pet dog and her footwarmer, and a charming little fan with a tiny mirror in its handle through which, unseen, she was able to observe all that went on. And Philip Francis was at her side. Once more he had journeyed to Paris for the sole pleasure of seeing her again.

In a *loge grillée* sat the author, Monsieur Beaumarchais, with the Abbé de Calonne and the Abbé Sabatier de Castres, critic and *littérateur*, to keep him company; in another the Comte d'Artois waited with burning impatience for the first glimpse of Mademoiselle Contat. Behind the thick silk curtains of the boxes one caught sight, ever and again, of magnificently gowned ladies with flashing jewels and astonishingly original hairdress. The vivacious Countess de Polignac, friend of the Queen, dined in her box that night; so did the fascinating and talented Madame de Genlis and the lackadaisical Princesse de Lamballe. The Queen herself arrived only when the play was about to begin.

Loud applause greeted the fall of the last curtain. Beaumarchais had triumphed with an overwhelming success. With a shrug Versailles accepted its defeat, but the play set Paris talking, now loudly, now in soft conspiratorial whispers, for *The Marriage of Figaro* had given men whose minds were already saturated with the teachings of the Philosophers much food for thought.

II

Very painstakingly, for a time, Catherine resisted the seductive influence of gay Parisian society and rigidly kept to the path of propriety. Refusing monetary help from Francis, she continued to live in the company of Madame Vanlée on the annuity which Thomas Lewin had made her.

But gradually, very gradually and slowly, like a cat stealthily pursuing a mouse, her old enemy ennui began to stalk her waking hours. She began to yearn again for the gaiety and luxuries to which both Francis and Lewin had accustomed her. Under Madame Vanlée's roof even respectability grew irksome. At last, defeated by boredom, she decided to set up an establishment of her own. From a Monsieur de Presle she rented a house. It was situated in the Rue Sentier. Valdec Delessart, a banker of great wealth, who within a few brief years was to become a minister of the Legislative, was her next-door neighbour.

But Catherine soon found herself deeply involved in money matters. Her annuity, though generous and sufficient to provide for a comfortable home, left her little in hand for the luxuries that she so passionately desired. She longed to live the life of a woman of fashion with money enough to engage the services of a good dressmaker and to enable her to acquire fine jewels, fans, shoe buckles, ribbons and laces. In addition, she pined for a carriage and horses, for how else could a woman of fashion, in the course of one short day, manage to pay calls, shop, drive in the Bois, and later put in an appearance at a ball, the theatre or the Opéra? With such demands craving for fulfilment, one career only lay open before her, a career in which her beauty, her childlike *naïveté* and her extraordinary practical common sense, assured her unlimited

success. Unresistingly and, indeed, deliberately, she allowed the tide of her desires to carry her into the harbour of courtesanship. Valdec Delessart, her next-door neighbour, who had fallen passionately in love with her, became her first lover. . . .

For more than two years Delessart was to be "the superintendent of the finances" of her house. Generously he made up the deficit between her annuity and the money which she spent on the upkeep of a splendid establishment. She applied to him for everything. He paid even such meagre trifles as the wages of a maid or a few paltry francs for the repairing of a watch. In 1786 she had her house completely renovated with new wall-paper, tapestries and gilding. Her boudoir was made particularly enchanting with "four large panels with arabesques of an English green background, and pink cameos and painted pilasters framing the panels." To the painters alone, on this occasion, Delessart paid the sum of 1,370 livres.

Catherine now began to entertain on a lavish scale. Since she could command as much money as she needed, she lived in great style. She dressed tastefully and beautifully, patronised the best milliners and dressmakers, and bought only the finest jewels, ribbons and feathers. . . . The "beautiful Indian" soon became the most glamorous courtesan in that gay and extravagantly reckless society which danced so heedlessly beneath the lowering clouds of the approaching deluge.

On the 22nd of February, 1787, she gave a great ball at her house in the Rue Sentier, which set all Paris talking. Venus had never looked more beautiful than Catherine did that night in "a tight-fitting tunic of white taffeta trimmed with pink fringe; a skirt of white crêpe striped with white satin ribbon, spangled with silver and bordered with the same ribbon, the hem bordered similarly with laurel flowers; under-sleeves of white crêpe with spangles, tied up with a bracelet of pink larkspur, and a ruche of tulle

round the bodice." This magnificent costume cost 264 livres. Delessart paid for the dress as well as the sum of 288 livres for the violins. Very handsome he looked that night, though with contrasting modesty he had paid but nine livres for "a sword-knot of violet ribbon with marigold spots," which adorned his suit for the occasion.

Balls and the company of gay society did not, however, occupy all Catherine's time. Still desperately she clung to the ruins of respectability. And strange as it may seem, her beauty and air of refinement opened the door of many a fine mansion which, as a rule, was ever most sternly sealed against women of her profession. Even the dignified Madame Delessart, her lover's mother, received her regularly and willingly. It was here in Madame Delessart's house that she made the acquaintance of the young Baron de Frénilly to whom at first she paid but little attention, since at the time she considered him a mere child. Frénilly was enchanted by her loveliness from the very moment that his eyes first saw her. In his memoirs, years later, he etched a word-picture of Catherine at this time, "in the radiance of youth, with incomparable teeth, a transparent whiteness and a mass of fair hair such as was to be seen nowhere." To this he added with the sagacity of age: "She was a good woman at bottom—*la belle et la bête* at one and the same time!"

In addition to setting herself assiduously to acquire a certain measure of respectability, Catherine now, too, began to pay a considerable amount of attention to the improvement of her mind. She read a great deal, received such newspapers as the *Affiches de Paris* and *Le Journal Général de France* regularly, subscribed to the *Lycée des Arts de Labarpe*, and paid 576 livres for the Natural History of Buffon in thirty-two volumes, edited by Didot. And in the evening, she invariably attended either the Opéra, the Théâtre des Italiens or the Comédie Française, having a private box in each place.

For two years Delessart kept his "position" in her affections and in the management of her financial affairs. His place was taken at the end of that time by a delightful young gentleman from the Faubourgs Saint-Honoré, a district as sacred to bankers and people of financial interests as the environs of the Faubourgs of Saint-Germain were to the nobility. This young man was a wealthy "legal representative of an agent of Exchange"—in short, a stockbroker's attorney—and he proved as charming and gallant as his name, which was Rilliet-Plantamour.

It was now the year 1787. The air had grown thick and heavy with a cold, ominous, restrained silence. The horrid affair of the Diamond Necklace had caused the anger against Marie Antoinette to rise to a virulent pitch. No longer were the familiar cries of *Vive la Reine* heard in the streets of Paris. Dissatisfaction was spreading like an ugly sore. The masses, irritable and excited, were no longer vague in their desire for a new order. In their ears rang the strange tales that were being told by the volunteers who had recently returned from fighting in the American War of Independence, tales of a country of liberty and fraternity where there was no King or Queen or nobles, but only free and equal citizens. . . . France seethed with unrest. In Paris itself the teachings of Voltaire and Jean Jacques Rousseau were rapidly fermenting. . . . And in the background, the Bastille stood frowning fiercely, threateningly, with unfathomable menace.

CHAPTER III

THE OPERA HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH A GREAT AUDIENCE. In her box Catherine Grand, looking more beautiful than ever, reclined indolently against large soft cushions. Her only companions were a spaniel and a very young nobleman with the pretty face of a girl. The Opera did not interest her; the young man bored her. He was very rich and desired her as his mistress. She found him much too youthful. Coming from close behind her head his voice, soft and low, sounded like the drone of a very young bee hovering above its first flower. Its petulant tone got on her nerves. She tried not to listen to it and began to think of other things, of the bracelet Rilliet-Plantamour had given her the previous week, of a new hat that the milliner was busy making for her. She would have six plumes in it, six long curled plumes. . . . The youth's voice grew more insistent. She could no longer shut it out of her ears. He was bending over the back of her chair.

"Ever since I first beheld you," she heard him whisper passionately, "you have filled my whole life."

He is making a nuisance of himself, she was thinking. I shall have to send him away. His voice sounds so silly, like the purring of a kitten. She moved restlessly and fixed her eyes on the stage. That blue satin, she was thinking, I must get that blue satin from the shop in the Palais-Royal. It would make an enchanting gown. Sud-

denly her mind was torn from the dress to the singers on the stage. What a charming aria! Such a pity the prima donna was so fat, with a bust like a pouter pigeon's breast. But she certainly sang well. That high note——

"The thought of you is ever in my mind," whispered the young nobleman, while the prima donna hung on to her high note, and the curtain began to descend slowly. The first act was over. Like a great wave, applause inundated the theatre. Bravo! Bravo! Bravissimo!

"Ah," sighed Catherine. "It is not such a prodigiously dull opera after all. That climax was magnificent."

"And you have not heard a word that I have been saying to you," the youth complained bitterly.

"You should not talk to me when my soul is steeped in music," she scolded him lightly. "Have you come to a *conversazione* or an opera?"

"Yes, but——"

"There is no 'yes, but,'" she interrupted with mock gravity. "Monsieur, you have missed a great moment in life by your endless babbling. That last note! It was superb!"

"But, madame——" began the young man, and then he stopped, for the door of the box opened and Rilliet-Plantamour appeared, his hat under his arm. With an enchanting smile Catherine welcomed him as he bent down to kiss her hand. A moment later voices announced the arrival of other guests. His heart aflame with jealousy, the young nobleman stood apart, scowling in a corner, while Catherine held her little court. Just before the curtain rose on the second act, the guests departed. No sooner had the last one gone than eagerly the young man turned to Catherine as she was about to take her seat among the cushions.

"Madame, I beg of you, listen to me before the curtain goes up again and you become bewitched by the singers," he implored,

She smiled. "Well, monsieur, speak then, if you have anything to say."

"Indeed I have," he cried, "though no doubt, madame, you have heard it so often that repetition wearies you. I assure you with my life that my devotion to you is as deep as the ocean. You are as necessary to me as the beating of my heart. Will you not let me love you, madame?"

She sighed and tapped him on the shoulder with her fan. "What a dear foolish creature you are, to be sure," she said. Her head a little on one side, she looked at him intently. A gentle, almost motherly smile lay on her mouth. Then she moved, so that the curtain folds hid her as if in an alcove. "Come here, *mon ami*," she said softly holding out her hands. Eagerly he caught them and covered them with kisses. "There now," she soothed him. "There now." And then: "How old are you, *mon cher*?" she asked.

"I am eighteen, madame."

"Eighteen? And I am twenty-six."

"What does that matter?" he cried passionately.

"Matter? Monsieur, I am much too old for you. I do not wish to be your mistress. Do not let me have to say that again. I shall have to send you away for ever, my child, if you do not stop worrying me. . . . But we could be friends?"

"I cannot be only your friend," he cried hotly.

"No?" Slowly she turned from him and sat down among her cushions. "Very well then, since we cannot be friends I must send you away. . ."

He stood silent as a ghost among the shadows, and she sat watching the stage. After some minutes she spoke again. "Take up the glasses, *mon ami*," she said gently, "and tell me who is here to-night."

For a moment only he hesitated before obeying her soft command. Carefully he scanned the stalls and boxes and repeated the names of people in the audience. She

barely listened to what he was saying. His voice went on and on. "Madame de Polignac, the Vicomte de Lambertye, Madame Lebrun, Monsieur Edouard Dillon——"

She leant sharply forward. "Monsieur Dillon, did you say?" she asked.

"Yes, madame, in the second box on the right."

A smile touched her lips. While the young nobleman's voice droned on she played with her fan so that the little mirror in the handle caught and held the reflection of the man in the second box on the right. At last she closed her fan, but sat gazing at him so fixedly, that her eyes attracted his. He looked at her, looked away, then looked again. A few minutes later he left his box.

Catherine had long been fascinated by Edouard Dillon, but, deeply occupied with a passionate liaison, he had paid her little attention. Small wonder then that, when he entered her box that evening, she felt like a general who had won a great victory.

"Am I an intruder?" he asked as he bent down to kiss her finger-tips.

"Not in the least, monsieur."

He sat down in a chair immediately behind her, half hidden by the curtains. It was the chair in which the young nobleman, all through the first act, had sat babbling of his love. But now he had moved to the back of the box and stood there in the shadows, hot tears burning his eyes. Catherine had completely forgotten his existence. At last, blind with anger and jealousy, he fled from the box. She did not even notice that he had gone. Edouard Dillon was close beside her, gallant and romantic Dillon, so very much the fashion among the greatest ladies in Paris.

II

Edouard Dillon possessed a profound knowledge of the world, boundless self-assurance, perfect manners, and exquisite wit. His astonishing good looks had earned for him the nickname of "Handsome." Women found him as fascinating as *le diable* himself. He moved in the highest circles. At one time he was alleged to be Madame de Polignac's lover ; at another the intimate of the Queen. Certainly he was frequently out hunting with the Royal party, and often at the Trianon to rehearse the figures of a quadrille with Marie Antoinette. Such visits were enough for a jealous Court to spread fresh scandals about the hated Austrian Woman.

Stories about dare-devil Dillon were always being bandied about in society. Catherine knew all of them. How she had laughed at his encounter with the provincial gentleman ! The whole thing had begun so absurdly, at a supper party given at the house of one of the King's ministers. Dillon, deeply engrossed in a lady, who, for the moment, possessed his tenderest affections, found himself rudely interrupted by a doltish gentleman from the provinces who sat facing him across the table.

"Monsieur Dillon," said the man, fingering some small jars which stood before him, "I should like to ask you what these pots are for."

"*À l'avoine*," answered Dillon curtly.

The provincial gentleman flushed red as a beetroot. Unaware that "*Pots à l'avoine*" were a dish very much in fashion at the moment, he took the word at its literal meaning which signified "for oats." *Mon Dieu*, did that Parisian fop take him for a horse ! Never before had he been so deeply insulted. "Indeed, monsieur," he answered sharply. "Then I shall send you some straw !"

Edouard made no reply. Calmly he continued his conversation with the lovely lady at his side. But immediately after supper when the ladies had withdrawn, he delivered his challenge, the only possible reply a gentleman could give to so offensive a retort. The meeting was arranged for the following day, Edouard choosing an hour just before noon, for he strongly objected to be disturbed too early in the morning. When the provincial gentleman arrived at his opponent's house next day at the appointed time, Edouard was not quite ready to receive him. He had not yet finished dressing. He apologised charmingly for the delay, but, not one whit perturbed, continued his toilet in the most leisurely manner.

"Sir, if you have no business calling you elsewhere," he said a moment later, putting the finishing touches to his cravat, "may I suggest that we go to the wood of Vincennes? You see, I am dining at Saint Maur afterwards and I see that I shall barely have time to keep my appointment."

The provincial gentleman's eyes bulged in their sockets. "Then you intend——!" he exclaimed aghast.

"Certainly, sir," Dillon interrupted him calmly. "I intend to dine at Saint Maur after I have killed you, for I gave my promise last night to Madame de——"

The duel was fought in the wood of Vincennes. But Dillon kept only one of his promises. He dined at Saint Maur.

III

Dillon had arrived at the Opera alone and in a mood of black dejection. On the following day he was leaving Paris. All the plans for his departure were complete. It was not business but the sudden rupture of a passionate liaison which had made him decide to forsake, for a while,

the city and the pleasures that he loved. In a voyage to the East he hoped to find forgetfulness of the injuries which both his heart and his vanity had suffered.

As he sat in his box, his eyes fixed unseeingly on the stage, he was thinking: "To-morrow I shall be gone. When shall I again sit here in this great building with the voices of singers echoing in my ears? The East! I am going to the distant and savage East. I am leaving Paris. This is my last night of civilisation. My last night. Perhaps the sight of the beautiful shoulders of Parisian women gleaming soft and white under the yellow candle-lights will be lost to me for ever. . . ." Suddenly he became aware of someone staring at him with fixed concentration. He turned his head sharply in the direction of that intent, compelling gaze and saw Madame Grand watching him from her box. Indolently he raised his spy-glass and fixed it on her. *Mon Dieu*, but she was indeed incredibly beautiful! Was it true, he wondered, that she understood the most subtle nuances of love better than any other woman in Paris, as he had heard it positively asserted? Then why had he neglected her? He should have made it his business to know her better. Now, alas, it was too late. He was leaving Paris.

He continued to watch Catherine, and second by second his mood changed. Could it indeed be true, he mused, that her lips tasted like honey and her breath was as sweet as the perfume of a rose? . . . An all-devouring curiosity consumed him. He said to himself: "I am leaving for the perilous East. This is my last night in Paris. No man has a right to spend his last night alone. . . ." The next instant he left his box.

IV

Before the curtain came down on the second act Catherine left the Opera. Following her along the wide corridor, the rustle of her skirts sounded to Edouard Dillon like the sound of the sea as it rushes past the bows of a ship. When they reached the front door she ordered her carriage. A minute later, with Dillon beside her, the carriage moved off, the hoofs of the two superb bays clattering out a metallic *obbligato* on the cobble-stones. There were few vehicles and pedestrians in the streets, but ever and again a linkman, swinging his lantern, sauntered into view calling his monstrously raucous cry of "Here's a light, here's a light," loudly into the night.

In the dark interior of the carriage Catherine sat erect and stately as a princess, smiling to herself. Edouard Dillon, friend of Madame de Polignac and of the Queen, for whom she had long had a secret passion, was at last riding in her carriage! The most sought-after man in the fashionable world of Paris had, of his own free will, chosen to spend his last night in France not with his august friends in the mighty circles of the Trianon, but in supping alone with her, with Catherine Grand. Her heart was afire with triumph.

When the carriage stopped before her house in the Rue Sentier, she led Dillon into a room lit with many candles. The table was decorated with flowers and set for two. She took off her velvet cloak and laid it on a chair. A maid appeared. "Is everything ready?" she asked.

"Yes, madame."

"Good. Come, monsieur." She made him sit down at the table, facing her. The maid brought in the supper.

"If there is a ring at the door," she told the maid who was about to withdraw, "say I am in bed and asleep and

must not be disturbed on any account. Do you understand? Not on any account."

"Yes, madame." Quietly the maid shut the door.

The food was delicious, the wine most excellent. The minutes sped by on gossamer wings. Edouard was charming. He felt very happy. Watching her across the table everything about her enchanted him, her voice, her face, her supple figure, her beautiful complexion, her small tapering hands, her hair. Ah, her hair. He said: "When I am far away in distant barbaric lands, and have almost become a savage, I shall recall Paris to mind only because I shall remember your hair, madame."

"You like my hair?" she asked him.

"It is as divine as some heavenly tune, as colourful as an epic poem. All the gold of Sheba's mines glitter in one tress, madame."

"Monsieur, you tease me with too much flattery."

"Flattery, madame! Beauty cannot be flattered. It can only be adored."

She smiled at him. Her blue eyes, large and limpid, looked at him with the innocence of a child. "You are very generous, monsieur," she said. "But, indeed, you have no conception yet of what it is really like. Shall I show you?"

"Madame, does a man dying in the desert of thirst feel satisfied with one small sip of water?"

She rose from the table. "You will pardon me for a moment, monsieur?"

He bowed, and she passed into her boudoir and closed the door. Leisurely he turned to inspect the room. It was tastefully furnished with everywhere touches of daintiness that bespoke the nature of the owner. He went up to the mantelpiece and stood watching the tiny figures of a white marble clock, shaped like a temple, as they moved round and round the dome. He wondered why Catherine loved little clocks. The room was full of them.

"Shall we finish supper, monsieur?"

He turned sharply at the sound of her voice to find her standing beside the table, one hand resting on the back of the chair. She had loosened her hair and it fell in a golden cascade on her shoulders. Teasing tendrils caressed her forehead, "smooth as alabaster and white as a lily." Like a "second Eve before the Fall" she stood there "naked and unashamed." Awed, he gazed at her in silence, marvelling at the perfection of her loveliness. She smiled at him and sat down at the table.

"Do you like my hair like this, monsieur?" she asked, her eyes innocently inspecting a sugared plum which she held between her fingers.

In one stride he was at her side. He stooped and kissed her hand, then, raising a curl, pressed it to his lips. "I am enraptured, madame," he cried. "Never have I seen anything so exquisitely beautiful in all my life."

"As my hair, monsieur?"

"As your hair, madame," he answered with a bow.

She motioned him to his chair. So they finished their supper. . . .

First one little clock struck the hour of dawn and then others answered it, one by one. They were all just seconds behind each other.

He took her face between his hands and kissed her mouth, first one corner, then the other, then full on the lips. Then, gravely, he stood looking down into her eyes. They resembled violets, he thought, blue violets. His fingers caressed her loosened hair. "I am grateful, Catherine. Most deeply grateful," he said gently. "I shall ever hope that I may see you soon again."

"And I, monsieur," she answered him, "I also shall hope." Her eyes were large and blue and moist. Her hair tumbled about her shoulders like a golden waterfall. She was a courtesan. She had had many lovers. But in

this moment, trembling in his arms, she seemed to him like a maiden who had given him her first love.

At last he went away. The city was still asleep. He felt suddenly sad as he walked through the empty streets. . . . It was true, quite true, all that men said of Madame Grand. Better than any other woman in Paris she understood the most subtle nuances of love. He wondered vaguely what scent she used. It was delicious. *Mon Dieu*, if only he were not leaving so soon for the dangerous and distant East! But perhaps, when he returned . . . He would not stay away too long. One could not stay away too long from Paris. . . .

But Edouard Dillon was reckoning without the Furies. They kept him out of Paris for twenty-six years, and many things changed in that time—even Catherine Grand.

CHAPTER IV

I

THROUGHOUT FRANCE, DURING THE TERRIBLE WINTER of 1787-8, death stalked hand in hand with famine, and discontent was rife. Like scarlet fever, uneasiness spread from the bourgeoisie to the common people, to whom the teachings of the Philosophers were no longer juggled words but facts. Louder and louder grew the outcry against oppression, injustice and extortionate taxation. The masses had at last become articulate about the iniquities and wrongs under which they were made to suffer. Their hearts were filled with bitter anger against the nobles and the monarchy—against the Queen in particular. At the Trianon, where the air was sweet with the music of Gluck and Puccini, Marie Antoinette tried to put a restraining hand upon the bridle of her vanity and extravagance. People of fashion, considering philanthropy and simplicity quite the mode, chattered artlessly of nature and philosophy and the rights of man.

But the new year which had been born in travail continued its noisy outcry, and in the Rue de Paradis, at the house of Theresia Cabarrus, wife of the Marquis de Fontenay, Mirabeau and Robespierre and Camille Desmoulins roamed among the guests, casting the first warning shadows of the approaching Revolution. The barque of State was sailing perilously across the turbulent sea of unrest. Poor, well-intentioned Louis XVI hastily summoned Necker once again to take the helm. But the ship continued to

toss drunkenly. Then, in obedience to the clamour of the notables, Louis called the States-General, that mighty assembly of Nobles, Clergy and Commons which had not been convoked for one hundred and seventy-five years.

On the 5th of May, 1789, the members of the States-General, some in violet robes and snow-white plumes, some in dark citizenlike attire, marched in solemn procession through the streets of Versailles. Limping with the clergy came a certain Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, the newly created Bishop of Autun. Versailles wore an air of gaiety and joyful celebration. Flags waved in the breeze, garlands and tapestries hung from the house-fronts. The Court showed all its splendours. Never did the Queen look so beautiful as she did that day in a violet, white and silver robe with ostrich plumes on her head. But behind her proud mask of majesty she hid a heart tortured with anguish for her dying eldest son. . . . Half Paris had come to Versailles. Yet, among all that mighty throng not one soothsayer stepped forth to announce: "Messieurs and mesdames, the curtain is up. This is the first scene of the Revolution."

For six long weeks discussions raged in the States-General, and all that time the Commons faced the drawn daggers of the nobility and the clergy. Then came the final break. Finding themselves excluded from the Hall of the Assembly by the King, the Third Estate, having declared themselves the National Assembly, adjourned to a neighbouring tennis-court and there took a solemn oath not to separate until they had given France a new and better Constitution. "Tell your master," cried Mirabeau to the grand master of the ceremonies, "that we are here by the power of the people, and we shall not go hence save at the bayonet's point."

When Monsieur de Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, threw in his lot with Mirabeau, and the lower clergy joined the National Assembly, Royalty felt its authority crumbling

like soft, fresh bread. Louis was in a quandary. Yet, even now, if he had but taken a strong hand and declared for the Commons, the history of France might have been different. Instead, weak and vacillating, he turned for advice to the Queen, and his courtiers. Their counsel—an open challenge to the nation—he followed to the letter. Troops were massed on Paris and on the 11th of July, Necker, his only minister who was popular with the people, was dismissed and ordered to leave the kingdom without delay.

II

Since Catherine was a woman of fashion she followed its dictates slavishly. When everyone talked of nothing but nature and philosophy and virtue, she artlessly chattered of these things too. When people of *ton* took up the cry of simplicity, she joined her voice in the general clamour. And since it had become a fashionable craze to affect a wild admiration for Henry IV, one-time monarch of France—enthusiastically regarded by the masses as the patron saint of Paris because, it was believed, he would have liked to see a fowl in every old woman's stew-pot—she, too, developed a passionate adoration for this long-dead king. When philanthropy was the rage and simplicity the mode, and when it was no longer considered elegant to attire oneself in silks and satins and great panniered skirts, she took to wearing simple robes à la Jean Jacques Rousseau in lawn and batiste and woollen crêpe. In the daytime she tied her coiffure with a simple ribbon; in the evening she adorned her hair with flowers in dainty garlands. Because virtue had become fashionable, she demurely covered her neck and throat with billowy fichus secured with a charming, but essentially rustic, brooch. She no longer wore heeled shoes and discarded her high-piled head-dress with her bonnets.

Happily she gave herself up to the craze of "the villager and virginal" in fashion, modes which served to enhance her beauty. And all through the dying years of the French monarchy, whether she dressed to resemble "a divinely spiritual figure of Greuze" or a chaste village maiden, she remained still, in the eyes of the gallants of Paris, as desirable as ever.

III

The summer morning of July 12th dawned warm and bright. It was Sunday. No one yet believed that the King could have so summarily dismissed Necker.

Round about Paris regiments of Germans, Irish, Flemish and Swiss lay encamped. There had been rioting in the city, but it had ceased, yet the atmosphere remained strangely disturbed. Though streams of people were hastening to the chief revolutionary centre at the Palais-Royal, there were still peaceful men who quietly prepared to spend the day in the open with their families and friends in the Bois de Boulogne or at St. Cloud. Here and there in the streets citizens hailed each other with a wave of the hand and the cry of "*Vive la liberté!*"

Throughout that warm sunny morning the crowd at the Palais-Royal waxed greater and more excited as it waited impatiently for confirmation of the rumour that Necker had been removed from office. Only at four o'clock in the afternoon did a messenger come from Versailles. He was pale and dishevelled and soaked with sweat. For once Dame Rumour, that garrulous old hag, had told the truth, he said. The King had spurned his people. . . . Still and silent the crowd stood, as if stricken with a strange paralysis. At this moment a shabby young man entered the Café de Foy, the very heart of the turbulent Palais-Royal. He carried a pistol in one hand. In the other he

held a paper confirming the news of Necker's dismissal. It was Camille Desmoulins. He jumped on a high bench and began to speak—quickly, loudly, eloquently. He forgot his stammer. His tongue became a lash of scorpions with which he scourged the paralysed mob into electric vehemence. He built a pyramid of angry, burning words from the topmost peak of which, suddenly, leapt the raging flame of a single call. "*Aux armes, aux armes, aux armes!*"

The cry was taken up by a thousand throats and then a thousand more. Moment by moment it grew in force and volume till it swept through the Palais-Royal like a devastating cyclone. To arms! To arms! roared the mob as it rushed into the streets. There it divided into two. One half swept onward to wrest weapons from the Hôtel de Ville; the other hastened to the atelier of a famous sculptor, to clamour for a bust of the dismissed King's minister. In a flash the cause of Necker had become the cause of the nation. . . . The curtain had risen on the second scene of the Revolution.

Hour by hour the leaping flames of insurrection roared louder and louder through the streets. A new day dawned and still the conflagration spread. From tall church steeples the tocsin sounded its cry of alarum and the roll of drums called the people to assemble in public places. Out of the dank fever-holes and dark stench-poisoned passages of the underworld poured tortured dregs of humanity, noisily demanding food. Shrill above the siren cry for arms echoed the clamorous screams for "Flour and bread! Bread and flour!" . . . The sun set; "none but children slept that night," and the terrible Bastille frowned threateningly down upon the squalor and terror and gloom of vice-ridden alleys and narrow, fetid, twisty streets.

On the morning of July 14th the mob was still without arms. But now a rumour spread that weapons were to be

had in the arsenal at the Invalides, and despite the troops camped on the Champ de Mars, the Invalides was stormed. A mighty pillage began. Sabres, pikes, swords—every sort of weapon—was snatched up greedily. Then for the first time came the deafening cry : "*À la Bastille !*"

Menacingly the grim fortress of feudalism frowned down upon the approaching mob. The drawbridges were up. There was to be no firing unless the people attacked. . . . Later, however, one drawbridge was lowered and a body of men were allowed into the courtyard. Suddenly a volley of musketry from the fort mowed them down. . . . The smell of death rose heavily in the air. Revenge ! Revenge ! roared the ever-increasing mob. The heavens grew grey above the heads of the multitude shouting in unearthly fury "*La Bastille ! Nous voulons la Bastille !*" Smoke and flames began to rise from the cartloads of straw and hay which the besiegers set alight beside the stern walls of the impregnable fortress. Three times a deputation from the Hôtel de Ville, waving a white flag, came to offer a truce. Three times it was turned away. The mob wanted no truce. It wanted the Bastille.

The hours slipped by. Soldiers in the city defied their officers and, having seized two cannon from the arsenal of the Invalides, were bringing them up to help the besiegers. The garrison in the fortress began to show its sympathy for the mob. Only the twenty Swiss Guards still obeyed the Governor who, after a futile attempt to blow up his stronghold, agreed to surrender. The white flag was hoisted and above the shouts of "We want the Bastille" came the clarion cry : "You shall have the Bastille."

"The Governor and garrison shall march out with honours of war," ran the note of surrender.

"Let down the drawbridges," replied the mob, "and no harm shall come to you. No lives are to be taken. There will be no bloodshed. Only let down the drawbridges."

An officer of the Queen's regiment accepted the conditions "on the word of an officer." The bridges were let down, the gates opened. In rushed the mob, a wild, demented horde. "Victory! Victory! Liberty! No quarter! No quarter!" it cried. Mad eyes bulged from their sockets and froth foamed on evil lips. Swords, pikes, clubs and sabres flashed and splintered and in steaming streams flowed the red reeking blood of dead and dying men. Murder and infamy, hideous, cruel and insane, added agony to agony and piled horror upon horror. Only death was merciful.

That night, when the King lay sleeping in his great palace at Versailles, the Duc de Liancourt, Grand Master of the Wardrobe, came to tell him that the Bastille had been attacked and taken by the mob.

"It is a revolt then?" he asked drowsily, raising himself on an elbow.

"Sire, it is a Revolution," answered de Liancourt.

And Louis lay down again and resumed his interrupted sleep.

IV

With the capture of the Bastille the old régime collapsed. On the 27th of August the Declaration of the Rights of Man was published and Mirabeau, who desired to see a constitutional monarchy of the English type in France, was the man of the moment. He had pledged himself to the King, he and his friend Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun. They tried to work both for the King and the Revolution. But even the greatest statesman cannot serve two masters, and gradually conditions in France went from bad to worse. The gale of Revolution shrieked across the rising sea of turbulent passions, whipping up a cyclonic tide that carried Danton and Robespierre on its foaming crest. . . .

Step by step, wisely, Catherine Grand followed the paths of the Revolution. She made an orgy of simplicity and a minor creed of philanthropy. When the Declaration of the Rights of Man authoritatively decreed that, in future, class distinction must be based only on enlightened learning and merit, she turned her attention whole-heartedly to her educational shortcomings. Assiduously she began to cultivate the powers of her mind with the full determination not to be left stranded in the rear ranks of this new social order. With her usual *naïveté* mixed with a common-sense practicality, she started the long climb up the ladder of knowledge and instruction from the lowest rung by hiring a writing-master for twelve livres a month to teach her to form words with their proper letters. Up to this time she had still been mis-spelling certain words with an almost daring impudence. Now, too, she circumspectly deserted the Opéra for the Théâtre of Monsieur and the Français and religiously read the *Journal de Paris* which Rœderer edited.

On the 1st of May, 1790, she hired a house in the Rue d'Artois from Monsieur Barré, an architect. When she was asked for a guarantor for the annual rent of this establishment which amounted to 4,200 livres, she gave the name of a certain banker, Deputy for India at the Assemblée Constituant. With a flourish he signed his name as security, for, since the fall of the gallant Rilliet-Plantamour, it was he, Louis Monneron, who had become the protector of the loveliest courtesan in Paris and the guardian of her home and hearth.

The house in the Rue d'Artois was a fine building, newly constructed under a slate roof, with an imposing frontage on the street and a large courtyard. When she moved in, Catherine had it entirely repainted and regilded. She bought new furniture and attired her servants in new liveries. But everything, of course, bore the hall-mark of simplicity. The house was large. It had two halls, a

winding staircase and many rooms, also a garret, stables and a coach-house. Since the beginning of the Revolution, however, she no longer used her carriage. She kept it securely locked in her coach-house and, abandoning herself to the craze for simplicity, went out on foot. She wore out forty-six pairs of shoes in a single year.

To her house in the Rue d'Artois, one day, came the young Baron Frénilly. He had heard that she possessed a fine carriage but no horses. Ah, *mon Dieu*, but it was unbelievable that she should be deprived of so indispensable a necessity as a coach and horses! The Revolution? But still, it was inconceivable that Madame Grand's pretty feet should so much as touch the dirty cobblestones of Paris streets, even if there was a Revolution! . . . Now strange to relate, declared the young Baron Frénilly, he had a fine pair of white horses. They would look perfect in Madame's carriage. Perfect. . . . So he talked charmingly to Catherine Grand. His conversation made her forget, for a while, all about Danton and Robespierre and Mirabeau and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. He was no longer the silly boy of no consequence who had once lived in the house opposite to that of the mother of Valdec Delessart. He had quite grown up. . . . Indeed, indeed, his white horses would look magnificent in her derelict carriage! . . . So, one day, they hitched his horses to her carriage and away they went, through the gates of Paris. . . . At young Frénilly's lakeside cottage they tried to forget the Revolution, for a few brief days, in an interlude of spring sweetness, laughter and love.

CHAPTER V

I

“**W**HEN I AM GONE THEY WILL KNOW WHAT THE value of me was. The miseries I have held back will burst from all sides on France. I carry in my heart the death-dirge of the French monarchy.” So ran the prophecy of that shrewd statesman of great insight, that amazing genius with his high wrinkled forehead, formidable shock of hair and deep-set eyes wild with profligacy and debauch—Mirabeau, whom some called the instrument of God. . . . One April night he slept with two operasingers. The next day he was dead. The last man who could have interceded between the King and the people had gone to his grave a victim to the foul devastations of debauchery. His death left Louis XVI of France in a hopeless position, precariously suspended in air between the devil of unqualified surrender to the new order and the deep sea of flight. Louis chose the latter course. He fled from Paris to St. Cloud. But the people brought him back, and when again he tried to escape, this time to Metz, he and his family were ignominiously stopped at Varennes. Back in Paris he was forced into a declaration of loyalty and pledged himself to uphold the Constituent Assembly. France still wanted its King, but a King whose status was strangely changed from monarch to virtual prisoner.

Now a short period of calm set in and the Revolution lay spread across the land like a relaxed giant resting to renew his strength. But suddenly the giant stirred. The

breathing space was over. Danton, the champion, had begun to prepare the minds of the people for a Republic ; Robespierre's roar echoed in the Jacobin Club and at the miniature Court of Coblenz, outside the borders of France, the *émigrés*, by their conduct and their clamour to foreign powers to stem the flow of the Revolution, were adding fuel to the fires of passion. And then, though France was sorely unprepared for hostilities, Louis and his Girondin ministry declared war on Austria in the spring of 1792. Everywhere the French armies suffered calamitous defeat. Disaster which followed disaster only served to rouse the anger of the mob against the King and, with infinitely greater violence, against the Queen. The Court Party was denounced ; the Queen was abused and vilified. She was the "Austrian woman," the arch-traitress, perfidious and wicked, whose treachery in favour of the land of her birth had brought misfortune to the arms of France. Down with the Austrian woman, howled the mob ! Down with treason and faithlessness ! In a mighty wave the yelling *sansculottes*, giving tongue like wild beasts in full cry, stormed the Tuileries. Like an immense pack of hungry wolves they surged about the defenceless King, raving and scoffing and threatening him with the strange sharp weapons with which they were armed. They stuck the red cap of Liberty upon his head. . . . The Revolution was making itself master of France. But on this day, Louis and Marie Antoinette, his Queen, "poor dupes of the vehement needs of the times," won their last victory for the monarchy. For it was by their royal dignity and courage only that they saved their lives.

II

All this while Catherine Grand was still making concessions to the spirit of the times. She was living now

in a house in the Rue Mirabeau under the protection of a wealthy nobleman of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the dashing Vicomte de Lambertye. She had a fine house, elegant furniture, jewels and money enough. Shrewdly, however, she displayed little of her wealth. She dressed simply, lived quietly and never appeared abroad in her carriage. Her practical common sense warned her of the wisdom of discretion. In these troublesome times it was sound policy to emulate the chameleon, particularly for one who had been so conspicuous a member of gay society as this notorious courtesan. True, no one could accuse her of the crime of noble birth, but there was no denying either her association with the nobility and the higher bourgeoisie or her wealth.

Day by day as Paris grew more and more dangerous for people like Catherine Grand and her high-born protector, the fingers of fear tightened about her heart. Yet when Lambertye, soon after the Declaration of Pilnitz, fled to England, she refused to accompany him. Despite her growing anxiety, she chose to remain in the city that she loved. She did, however, take three further precautions for her welfare—she packed a great many of her possessions like one about to set out on a journey, she had her coach repaired so that it would be ready for use should she require it for sudden flight, and she sublet part of her house to a loyal and worthy citizen of the middle class, named Amalin. But in spite of this last preventive measure to ward off suspicion and ensure good faith, her house was searched by the Committee of the Section of Mirabeau early in May, exactly eighteen days after Citizen Amalin had moved into one part of it. The Committee discovered nothing but her possessions. Of these an inventory was made. It was a lengthy process. The contents of one trunk only—a collection of silver and gold-plated coffee-pots, tea-pots, pepper-pots, candlesticks, tea-caddies, sugar-tongs, forks, spoons, dishes and salvers—were worth a

small fortune. So were her furs, of which one cupboard alone harboured eleven pieces of mink's tail, seven strips of martin's tail, a tippet of blue fox and a muff of silver fox. The searchers adjourned to her library. Carefully they inspected her books and wrote down the titles in a long list. There they found the *Histoire de Prusse* by M. de Mirabeau, the *Voyage d'Anacharsis*, the *Chevalier de Faublas*, the *Contes* of Boccaccio and those of Voltaire, the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the *Fables* of La Fontaine, a "Boileau in 2 volumes bound in red morocco, by Didot," the *Pucelle d'Orléans*, the *Henriade*, the *Entretiens du Palais-Royal*, a collection of songs, and the *Femme vertueuse*. . . . At last the search was over. The Committee of the Section of Mirabeau had done its work. Nothing had been discovered to arouse suspicion and the investigators took their departure. Alone once more Catherine Grand stood pale and trembling. Alarm bells of warning clanged in her heart.

Still she would not forsake Paris. The days passed and now in her ears the low mutterings of the *sansculottes* sounded like the moan of the sea when the tide comes in. The mutterings grew in volume till they rose to yells and raving howls as, on that 20th day of June, the mob rushed into the Tuileries to mock and taunt and menace a weak, defenceless King, suddenly grown strong with a strange calm dignity and courage. That day, filled with dread, Catherine rushed out to buy forty-six ells of tricolour ribbon from Citizen Boucon, purveyor of ribbons and scarves to the municipality. Busily she set about turning the narrow strips of silk into rosettes and bows so that she might wear tricolour cockades conspicuously on her breast and in her hair.

III

From Paris the Revolution had spread to the far corners of France. Everywhere the seeds of civil war began to push their heads above the ground. Danton was the man of the moment; the voice of Maximilien Robespierre rang loudly through the Jacobin ranks; and on the road from Marseilles sounded the tramp of feet as a crowd of young men came swinging along to the time of a new marching song. Soon after they had reached the gates of Paris everyone was singing their ditty. The workmen of the south-eastern section of the city gave the tune a name. They called it the "*Marseillaise*." . . .

Prussia had joined Austria and declared war on France, and now from Coblenz the Duke of Brunswick, Commander of the allied armies, issued a manifesto to the French people—a document which Louis of France had asked of his Germanic friends but which, undoubtedly, he had never dreamed would be worded with such monstrous insolence. The manifesto commanded the people of France to submit unequivocally to their legitimate sovereign; exhorted them "not to oppose themselves to the march and operations" of the allied troops; and warned them that "if the least assault be perpetrated against the King and Queen and the Royal Family," the forces of Prussia and Austria "would take an exemplary and never-to-be-forgotten vengeance by giving up the town of Paris to military execution and to total subversion." That fatal manifesto sealed the doom of Louis XVI.

"*De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace, et la France est sauvée*," ran Danton's motto—words that were taken up by Robespierre, Marat, Desmoulins and the Paris mob, and went echoing through the length and breadth of the land, fomenting insurrection.

On the 2nd of August, 1792, Catherine ordered "a Greek chemise of grey taffeta shot with green." It was paid for and delivered almost immediately—this cloak most suitable for a lady preparing for a long journey. . . . But the storm broke before she had quite made up her mind to flight. On the calm starlit night of August the 9th, the gale of insurrection, which Danton had been raising with his speeches, broke over the roofs of Paris. All night the tocsins sounded. The people were slow to assemble, and meanwhile in the Gardens of the Tuileries the King, who had gathered six thousand men about him, stood waiting anxiously. "When will the revolt begin?" he kept asking Roederer repeatedly. "When will the revolt begin?"

But when it began it was not a revolt. It was the Deluge which Louis XIV had prophesied. . . . The mob entered the Carrousel; it stormed the Tuileries. The garrison was killed; the Swiss Guard, fighting valiantly, retreated through the gardens, and the King and his Royal Family fled to the Riding-School and then onward to seek refuge in the Assembly.

Roused to demoniacal fury, the *sansculottes* poured like molten lava through the streets. In a wild and frenzied orgy they sacked and pillaged as they went. Maddened by the heroic and loyal devotion of the Swiss Guard at the Tuileries, they massacred every Swiss that came within the reach of their murderous arms. Not one was spared. Not even the porter of Catherine Grand's house in the Rue Mirabeau. From a window high up beneath the roof she saw him horribly done to death before her terrified eyes. Now her cup of fear ran over. The next day, when the monarchy was suspended and Louis and his Royal Family were sent as prisoners to the Temple, and a great terror came to rule in place of the King, she fled precipitately from Paris.

CHAPTER VI

I

WRAPPED IN A LONG CLOAK, CATHERINE GRAND SAT with her head pillowed on the bosom of her maid as the packet for Dover, which carried her from France, crept across the English Channel. Dizziness and nausea, added to overwhelming fatigue, sent her, at times, almost into a state bordering on semi-consciousness. She longed to swoon into forgetfulness of the terrors that racked her mind and the awful knowledge of her plight. She felt desperately ill. One moment, waves of heat burned her aching limbs, the next, a cold sweat bathed her body. Helplessly she wept tears of weariness and sorrow.

Hours passed. Tortured with fever and fatigue she fell asleep at last. Then suddenly she was awake again. Voices were raised in excitement about her. Someone close beside her cried loudly : " See, there it is, the English coast." She opened her eyes, deep blue with sleep and troubled with fever and anxiety. Dumbly she stared into her maid's face. The woman smiled. " Would you not like to see it too, the English coast ? " she asked gently. " There is sunlight falling on it, madame."

" Sunlight ? " said Catherine wonderingly.

With the maid's help she rose to her feet and walked to the ship's side. There, leaning against the rail, she stood listlessly staring at the white chalk cliffs of Dover which loomed out of grey-blue hazy veils of distance. Cool and refreshing the salt spray fell on her burning



MADAME GRAND

By Vigée Le Brun

cheeks. She threw back her head and inhaled the sharp tang of the sea.

"You are feeling a little better, madame?" asked the maid.

"I don't know. It is as if I were living in a nightmare. Nothing seems real but the weariness of my body."

"But you will soon be well again, madame. There in England, where the sun shines on the cliffs, we shall find peace and happiness."

"Happiness?" said Catherine. "But we are alone. What will become of us?"

"The Vicomte de Lambertye——"

"Shall we ever find him again, do you think? . . . So alone, so friendless," she mused. Then, suddenly, sharply, she asked: "How much money have we got?"

The maid fumbled with a purse. In silence she showed its contents cupped in the palm of her hand. Catherine touched the coins one by one. "Twelve louis."

"Ah, but, madame, we have our lives. We are safe."

"Safe? Yes, yes, safe, my friend, and penniless in a strange land." Catherine looked across the narrow strip of sea that lay stretched between her and the strange land. She saw trees and grassy slopes and tiny thatched cottages and Dover Castle clear-cut against the sky. And she wept again, pitifully.

But the gods were watching over Catherine Grand that day, for on the quay where she sat half swooning in her maid's arms, a young man saw her, a young man who wore the uniform of a British midshipman. Never in all his life had he seen so lovely a lady so distressed and ill. Her beauty bewitched him. Suddenly it seemed to him that he was no longer a young naval cadet but a hero of some ancient fable, the youngest son of the fairy tale whose duty it was to rescue beautiful princesses from the cruel enchantments of ogres. In this spirit he approached

Catherine Grand, gave her his name, which was Nathaniel Belchier, and offered her his services. Because he was kind and sympathetic and gallant, she told him her story—how she had once lived in India and had there married an Englishman; how she had left India because of her unhappiness and before obtaining a divorce from her husband; and how now she had fled from France, leaving all her property behind in Paris.

"But if you are still a British subject, madame," said Belchier, "you have a right to claim your property from the French Government."

"A right? But I am so tired, so tired," she answered him. Her eyes suddenly dilated with terror. "My porter, the Swiss. They murdered him beneath my windows. . . . They were slaughtering innocents. And I grew afraid and ran away. But I had done nothing treacherous, do you understand, nothing unpatriotic. I was only afraid."

Nathaniel Belchier's glance never left her face, that pale, beautiful oval face set in its frame of golden hair. He felt half drunk with admiration and daring.

"They were like hungry wolves," he heard her whisper. "Hungry wolves. And I fled from Paris, I and my maid. I scarcely know how we reached the coast of France. I was barely alive. My maid, this good and faithful creature, saved us both. But now that we are here, I do not know what will become of us. We have no papers. This is all we possess." She opened her purse and he saw the few poor coins huddled together, like lost children. In that instant he felt that he had but one mission in life—to help her. He said very gravely: "Madame, if you will allow me, I shall recover your possessions."

"But they are in France, monsieur! In France!" she repeated.

"I know, madame, and it is from France that I mean to fetch them."

"But why should you do this dangerous thing for me, a stranger, washed up on the shores of England?"

"Because, madame," he answered gravely, "by rendering a small service to the loveliest lady I have ever seen, I wish to satisfy my own deep selfishness."

Tears welled up in her eyes. "You would risk your life for me?" she asked.

"If by doing so I could bring happiness to yours, madame"—and he bowed.

She looked at him dumbly. Her lips trembled. She made a blind, supplicating movement with her hands towards him, then fell back swooning in her maid's arms.

Late that evening the Dover coach took Catherine Grand, accompanied by her maid and Nathaniel Belchier, to London. The young midshipman attended to her welfare, saw her safely installed in comfortable lodgings and then sought out his best friend, a young gentleman by the name of O'Dryer. Graphically he related his story. O'Dryer was an eager listener and ready for any adventure. So it happened that a few days later these two young errant knights set out for Paris with full power "to act for Madame Grand in the recovery of the property she had left there." Difficulties and dangers innumerable assailed them, but nothing daunted, they overcame them all and, three months later, arrived back in London with their mission successfully achieved. Into Catherine's hands they placed the fruits of their romantic venture—gold plate valued at eighty thousand livres, jewels worth three hundred thousand livres, two thousand one hundred louis d'ors in belts about their waists, and a lady disguised in sailor clothes—in short the greater portion of Catherine's property, valued at £25,000, as well as her friend, Madame Villemain from Abbéville!

As a token of her undying gratitude for his great kindness and magnificent daring, Catherine begged Nathaniel

Belchier to accept from her a large and generous sum of money. He refused it. He would take only £60, to defray the travelling expenses which he and O'Dryer had incurred. No other mode of payment was offered him. Nor did he desire it. He was a very gallant gentleman indeed. "Egad, sirs, I call the gods to witness, that my one aim and wish was to succour a sick and sorely distressed Royalist lady of the most wondrous and astonishing beauty," he hotly rebuked the bloods of the day who dared to chaff him about his reward. "I repeat, sirs, I desired no compensation, no compensation of any kind."

II

During the autumn and winter of this year, the trend and flow of the French Revolution and the gruelling adventures of the *émigrés* who were pouring into the country in vast numbers, formed almost the sole topics of conversation in England. Daily and by divers ways the fugitives arrived. The more fortunate ones crossed the Channel by the Brighton and Dover packets; others, who had escaped imprisonment and death only by fleeing in open boats, were brought to safety by English fishermen searching for lobsters close to the French coast.

London was full of refugees, and in the country districts near the metropolis the unhappy strangers formed themselves into small settlements. Madame de Genlis, one-time mistress of Philip Égalité, Duke of Orléans, and governess to his children, gathered a coterie of followers about her at Bury; Madame de Broglie hired a cottage at West Humble; another group of fugitives settled at Richmond, and yet another, and most famous of all, rented Juniper Hall, close to the home of Fanny Burney's sister, Susanna Phillips, in the Vale of Mickleham.

"There can be nothing imagined more charming, more fascinating than this colony," Fanny Burney wrote in a letter to her father at this time. "Between their sufferings and their *agréments* they occupy us almost wholly."

The Marquise de la Châtre, Monsieur de Jaucourt, the Princess d'Hénin, de Lally-Tollendal, Monsieur d'Arblay, who had been Lafayette's adjutant and who succumbed to Fanny's charms, the *ci-devant* duc de Montmorency, and Narbonne, until recently Constitutionalist Minister of War to His Majesty of France, were all members of this coterie of noblesse of whom, just before the end of January, Madame de Staël became the ruling queen. Many guests visited the colony at Juniper Hall, but after Madame de Staël's arrival none came more frequently than a certain limping gentleman with a snake-like smile and strange glittering eyes. He was Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, the excommunicated Bishop of Autun. Old Horace Walpole called him "the viper that has cast his skin."

"How do you like him?" whispered Madame de Staël to Fanny Burney on the day of his first appearance at Juniper Hall.

"Not very much," she answered. "But then, I do not know him."

"Oh, I assure you, he is the best of men," came the forceful assurance.

Not everyone felt so vehement an admiration for Monsieur de Talleyrand as Madame de Staël, yet he had a strange fascination even for those who despised him for his treachery and venality. There was wizardry in Talleyrand's personality. He had the ability to hide the gross garments of his unscrupulousness, profligacy and faithlessness with astonishing sang-froid beneath a cloak of dignity, courtliness, wit and eloquence. Such was the power of this man that, notwithstanding his physical unattractiveness, his lack of principles, honour and moral

prestige, he captivated many men and most women by the brilliance of his mind and the charm of his manners. Even prim Fanny Burney, with her preconceived prejudices, fell under his spell soon after their first meeting. "It is inconceivable what a convert Talleyrand has made of me," she wrote and told her father. "I think him now one of the first members and one of the most charming of this exquisite set. Susanna (Mrs. Phillips) is completely a proselyte. His powers of entertainment are astonishing, both in information and raillery."

III

Charles Maurice de Talleyrand belonged to one of the oldest and noblest families in France, the Talleyrand-Périgords. When he was quite a small child an accident rendered him lame for life and, since so great a family deemed it imperative to have as its head a physically sound and perfect man, Talleyrand was deprived of his rights as eldest son of the house in favour of his younger brother, the Comte d'Archambault. But what was to become of the limp-foot? Well, for such a one there was always the Church. So the cripple was educated at the Séminaire de St. Sulpice and at the Sorbonne and in the flower of his youth was forced into the Church. He had a violent dislike for the profession that had been foisted on him and made no secret of his disinclination for the priesthood. Early in life, therefore, he determined to use both it and his great name purely as the stepping-stones to his ambition. He wanted to be a statesman, a diplomat, and even as a student he assiduously cultivated the friendship only of those who would prove helpful to him in the achievement of his overweening desire for political power and riches. As a young man he frequented the *salon* of

Madame du Barry. It was she who first brought him to the notice of the King. At twenty-six this young priest of noble birth and outstanding ability whose great charm and wit were already coupled with the most flagrant immorality, became agent-general of the French clergy ; at thirty-five he was created Bishop of Autun and elected a member of the States-General which, after one hundred and seventy-five years, met at Versailles in 1789.

Talleyrand's career as a great statesman may be said to date from this fateful day in May. Now he turned to support the popular leaders and soon became the most prominent figure in the Assembly after Mirabeau. As his political career passed from brilliance to greater brilliance, his defiance of the Church increased. In the end he was excommunicated by the Pope. This was no great blow to the ambitious young man. Rather did he look upon it as a happy release. The cloak of the Bishop of Autun had served its purpose. Now at last he was plain Monsieur de Talleyrand, diplomat.

In January 1792, he accompanied Chauvelin to England in the capacity of unofficial ambassador. But strict orders had been entrusted to him. He was to persuade George III into a declaration of neutrality so that "the English fleet would not attack the French coasts while the armies of continental Europe were invading their frontiers." In this mission Monsieur Chauvelin's limping Minister Plenipotentiary of extraordinary charm and epigrammatic wit was eminently successful. Unfortunately, at the height of his success, the Revolution in France renewed itself and terror swept in with the tide. When the mob, loudly bawling the sinister "*Ça ira*," stormed the Tuileries on the 20th of June, England turned suspicious eyes on Talleyrand, and he promptly took his departure for Paris. He arrived to find a chaos of anarchy. Everywhere he heard himself called "the half-caste patriot." The Royalists

looked on his recent mission to England with mistrust ; the Jacobins suspected him of intrigues with the loathsome " Austrian Committee." Undaunted, he watched events from behind the barrier of his reserve, changed his principles " according to the wind of the day," and fixed his eyes on Danton, because Danton was the man of the moment. And when the monarchy fell and Danton became Minister of Justice, it was the polished, profligate ex-Bishop of Autun whom he chose as one of his counsellors.

But now, as excess followed excess and the extremists gradually gained power, Talleyrand grew restless. The mob with its cruelty and bestiality terrified him. At all costs he would escape its clutches. " Leave Paris," he advised all his friends. " Leave Paris." Graphically he painted the horrors that were to come. Hastily, secretly, they left, those terrified refugees of the Revolution. Talleyrand, too, wanted to leave, but not by illegal flight like an *émigré*. He wished to keep the doors of France open behind him in case he should soon desire to return. By intrigue and skilful trickery and by clinging to Danton like a limpet, he at last managed to obtain the document which legally let him out of France. " Pass Charles Maurice de Talleyrand going to London by our orders," ran the passport which Danton himself had signed.

So, a few months after he had left it as Chauvelin's Minister Plenipotentiary, Talleyrand was back in London again. Some believed that he had come on a secret mission, but to Lord Grenville he said : " I am anxious that you should know that I have absolutely no mission of any kind in England and have only come here to seek peace and enjoy liberty among its real friends." He went to live quietly in Woodstock Street, and there, for a time, the Comtesse de Châtre kept house for him. He spent many hours each day with Madame de Flahaut in Half Moon Street and corrected the proofs of her

latest novel; he became one of the "first members" of the brilliant colony of refugees who had settled at Juniper Hall.

It was the executions of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette that sealed Talleyrand's fate in England and brought his sojourn to an end. "Monsieur de Talleyrand was a deep and dangerous man." He had been the President of the Constituent Assembly that had organised the awful Revolution which England so deeply hated and condemned. True, despite his earlier precautions to quit France only with a passport, he had recently been declared an *émigré* by the Convention. But did that mean anything? One never knew what Talleyrand had up his sleeve. He was treacherous and deceitful. There was only one way of dealing with such a man. Pitt expelled him from England. On the 2nd of March, 1794, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand turned his back on Europe and set sail for that land of liberty, the United States of America.

IV

Meanwhile Catherine Grand, with her fortune restored to her by the gallantry and daring of Nathaniel Belchier and safely stored in the vaults of the Bank of England, was living quietly in London, quietly because, in view of the sobering effect which the fierce revolutionary events in France were having on English society, she deemed it wisdom to portray herself as an *émigrée* of impeccable propriety of conduct. Yet despite her decorum the drawing-room doors of the great were not opened to her. English society, with its prudish regard for social morals, was suspicious of Madame Grand and regarded her with the same stiff, snobbish disapproval with which it viewed the libertinism of the gay set which the Prince of Wales,

"with his appetite for pleasure and a head for foibles," had gathered about him.

Sternly, however, Catherine clung to her rôle of respectability. With no desire to be led off the path of propriety, she refrained even from informing Philip Francis of her presence in London. Then one day, quite by accident, they met. Catherine's decorous retirement came to an end. Gradually she drifted into that set which held determinedly aloof from the stiff snobbishness of Court society, that set to which the daring Duchess of Devonshire lent so much grace, and to which Fox and Sheridan belonged. For at this time Catherine had made the acquaintance of vivacious Bet Armistead, who had once been London's most prominent woman of the town, and who "knew more men and knew them better than any woman of her day." Once she had numbered the Prince of Wales, Lord Derby and the Duke of Dorset among her lovers. Now, though brilliant wits and men of fashion still gathered about her, she gave them only her friendship. Her love and loyal devotion belonged to Charles Fox for all time. Catherine often went to visit her at Chertsey, St. Anne's Hill. There the easily-moved Fox, "whose mind was impervious to social distinctions," welcomed her warmly and introduced her to his coterie of friends who, like himself, were so unpopular in England because of their sympathy with and understanding of the French Revolution.

But besides Philip Francis and the good folk at Chertsey—of whom, incidentally, Francis greatly disapproved, for he and Fox were at daggers drawn—Catherine had many other friends, Englishmen as well as *émigrés*. Nathaniel Belchier was still gallant and courtly; with the Vicomte de Lambertye she went to concerts at the Pantheon and to watch Mrs. Siddons act at Sadlers Wells. And one fine day she met Cristoforo Spinola, a diplomat of the Republic of Genoa, whose father-in-law, the Maréchal de Lévis, had lost his head in the Terror. During the last

months of her residence in England Spinola, with whom she had been on friendly terms for some time, became her lover.

But Juniper Hall, with its great cedars and spacious lawns so much beloved by Monsieur de Talleyrand and Madame de Staël, remained for ever an unknown world to Catherine Grand.

CHAPTER VII

I

“**L**OUIS MUST DIE BECAUSE THE COUNTRY MUST LIVE,” cried Robespierre. And Louis died, protesting to the end that he had never in all his life desired anything but good for his people. Nine months later Marie Antoinette his queen, gave up her life proudly, as befitted the daughter of Maria Theresa. The Reign of Terror, bathed in bloodshed and slaughter, had begun. Marat was murdered by Charlotte Corday in a passion of retaliation for the overthrow of the Gironde, and in the Place de la Révolution Madame la Guillotine did her mundatory work quickly and horribly to the music of rattling tumbrils. “To be safe,” said Hébert, “you must kill everybody.”

Then Danton and Robespierre overwhelmed the Hébertists and had them guillotined. But when the moderates tried to check the course of bloodshed, Robespierre resolved to free himself of his allies with violence, and on the 8th April, 1794, Danton and Desmoulins and their followers dropped their heads into a basket. Robespierre, egoist and arch-terrorist, and his Triumvirate were now supreme. In every village and town in France blood flowed in streams as the sharp axe of the guillotine descended on the necks of its victims. In Paris alone, within three months, three thousand people met death at the hands of the Revolutionary Tribunal. . . . Then the sickle of retribution mowed down the great Robespierre himself and his blood-lusting comrades, for the masses, surfeited with horrors,

had risen up against the harsh, contemptible oppression of tyranny.

But though Robespierre was brought to his end, the guillotine, for a time, still continued its awesome work, and the gilded youth of Paris, with hair arranged *à la victime*, still rushed along the boulevards pursuing its enemies with the old cry of Liberty.

But at last the Terror passed. The Jacobins were overthrown, and those of the Girondins who remained were summoned once again to take their seats in the Convention. Out of this Convention the Directory was born, the Directory of which Barras was the virtual dictator. Paris became gay once more. Though the poor suffered hunger and cold, the *bals des victimes* proved a great success, and the theatres were packed night after night. The Gardens of the Tuileries again became a favourite place of promenade, and women wore their hair cropped *à la sacrifice*, and covered their shoulders with a red shawl to memorialise the red chemise of Charlotte Corday.

Madame la Guillotine no longer cast her spectral shadow across France. The Revolution was over, its object achieved. Gone were ancient traditions, old forms of government and the old state of society. A new era had come with new influences, new customs and new manners. Madame Tallien, who had been Theresia Cabarrus, was the queen of Paris, and "a young, pale, sickly-looking" artillery officer, a Corsican named Napoleon Bonaparte, the hero of the October rising, came from a third-rate inn where he was living, to attend parties in Barras's *salon*.

With the Terror over and the Directory firmly established, France beckoned invitingly once again to Catherine

Grand. She longed for Paris, that strangely changed Paris where Theresia Tallien and Josephine Beauharnais, women like herself, were proclaimed the leaders of fashion and society. Cristofero Spinola's thoughts, too, had turned to France, for in France he hoped to retrieve, or to gain compensation for, the property of his father-in-law who had perished during the blood-fever of the Revolution. So Catherine Grand and Cristofero Spinola planned to make the journey across the Channel together.

For an *émigrée* it was not easy to re-enter France. But Catherine no longer feared for her head. With the pain of nostalgia quickening her pulses, she was ready to strike down every obstacle on her road to Paris. Boldly she approached the Danish minister in England and begged him to issue her a passport. She told him her story. It was a difficult case, said the Danish minister. Why had she come to him since she was the wife of a Swiss who had become a British national? Ah, but had he forgotten that she had been born in a Danish settlement in India, in Tranquebar? She cajoled prettily, as only Catherine could. She wept a little and looked lovelier than ever. Surely, surely the Danish minister could not find it in his heart to be cruel and refuse her so insignificant a request? . . . And he could not. She was too beautiful. Her eyes—never had he seen eyes so blue, so tenderly appealing. So Catherine Grand got her passport, a passport under a false name, and, in the company of Cristofero Spinola, left England one day for Hamburg. The town of Hamburg was full of French Royalists, chiefly Orléanists, impatiently waiting to slip back into France at the first propitious moment. Madame de Genlis was there and so was Madame de Flahaut. Among this gathering of *émigrés* Catherine found many old friends, and with the passing of weeks made a host of new acquaintances. Then one day she met a man with a pale face and a rich deep voice. He was very dignified and very courteous and very

witty. He was Monsieur de Talleyrand, the limping ex-Bishop of Autun, who had but recently returned from America.

III

In the country of Benjamin Franklin, and "in contemplating the imposing spectacle of a free people," Talleyrand had waited for France once more to open her doors to him. Madame de Staël, back again in Paris, had kept him well informed of the turn of events while she worked with all her might to get his name struck off the list of *émigrés*. Just when he had become so weary of his place of exile that he contemplated sailing for the West Indies, her efforts met with success. The edict of banishment was withdrawn. "So the business is ended, thanks to you," he wrote to her from America. "You have done everything that I desired. . . . It is to your house that I shall come on my arrival. . . . Dear friend, I love you with all my heart."

He set sail from America in a Danish brig on the 13th of June, 1796, and arrived at Hamburg at the end of July. The place was full of his friends and they welcomed him with pleasure and delight—all except his former mistress, Madame de Flahaut. She had become deeply enamoured of Monsieur de Souza, the Portuguese minister, and had made up her mind to marry him. Talleyrand's sudden arrival sent her into a fever. Fearing that this spectre of the past would irrevocably ruin all her plans for the future, she hastily despatched a message of cunning artlessness and gentle flattery to the inauspicious voyager on the Danish brig, subtly suggesting that he should refrain from coming ashore and, instead, return to America immediately! Needless to say, Talleyrand took not the slightest notice of this communication. He landed.

After spending a month in Hamburg with his friends, he departed for Amsterdam and Brussels. Quietly, on the 26th of September, 1796, he arrived back in Paris. Quietly, too, in the following year, the fifth year of the Republic, Catherine Grand, whom he had met one day in Hamburg, slipped across the German border into France.

BOOK V
QUESTA DONNA

CHAPTER I

I

ON A DAY WHEN THE RAYS OF THE SUMMER SUN drew the heat in waves from cobble-stones and dank doorways, and the Seine, gliding beneath its bridges, had the appearance of a stream of aluminium, Catherine Grand once again entered the city that she loved. As she sat staring through the window of the carriage that had brought her to Paris, tears poured down her cheeks. Was this the Paris that she had left almost five years ago, this dilapidated city with its shabby, crumbling houses, its shattered monuments and abandoned churches? Were these the fashionable faubourgs that once she had known, these impoverished suburbs where grass grew in the untidy streets? Where were all the riches and the glory of yesterday, the ceremony and pomp? Gone—all gone. The grand places of the mighty had been converted into pleasure saloons for the people; the hotels of the *haut-ton* now housed dissolute gambling-dens; the churches which had not been destroyed were being used as warehouses and dance halls; and monasteries had become barracks. Bitterly, that day, Catherine wept for the splendours of old which had disappeared from the capital of France.

But though she found Paris much defiled and sadly altered in outward comeliness, she was soon to discover that it was as gay a city as ever, merry with a new, wanton, dissipated gaiety. The sullen thunder of the Revolution had died away into silence, the Terror was gone and, in

direct reaction to agony and fear, the pendulum had swung to frenzied revelry and unbridled licence. Amusement and enjoyment had become the fundamental desires of every man and woman. Gaming and dancing were reckoned among the major interests of life. To the churches, convents, monasteries and palaces which this new era had converted into dancing saloons, came the citizenesses eager to tread joyous measures, their hair cut short and curled in supposed resemblance of an ancient Roman fashion, their scanty muslin gowns exposing their bare legs, flat sandals on their feet and rings on their toes. Almost as strangely attired as themselves were their escorts, men who wore their clothes deliberately ill-cut in deference to fashion's dictates, with hats pulled low over their brows and necks swathed in enormous cravats that covered their chins and bordered their lower lips.

No longer was there a gathering together of friends in little intimate groups and friendly cliques, for such gatherings, for the most part, were looked upon with suspicion by the police since they might well harbour conspirators against the power of the Directory. So, with spies and plotters everywhere, it was deemed wiser that Paris should live its life publicly and in the open, at the theatres, at fêtes, in the gardens and at subscription balls. And since blood no longer held rank, monseigneur of yester-year rubbed shoulders in the great assemblies with parvenus speculators, and my lady of good birth and the butcher's wife, reduced to equality by the all-embracing designation of citizeness, danced together in the same quadrille. In all things but one these people were as like as peas—and this one was manners. For manners were the only real social distinction that still remained.

In this Paris to which Catherine had returned after an absence of four years, many outward forms of the Revolution were still being observed. Pet dogs were carefully trained to growl at the mention of an aristocratic name; the

revolutionary jargon was still being used as well as the new calendar, and every tenth day was an excuse for a gala celebration. As the old rulers had given way to the new in the realms of government, so too, in society new leaders filled the high places once occupied by the great ladies of the past, now either dead or fled to foreign lands. The five foremost feminine principals of society were Theresia Tallien, daughter of the once impoverished adventurer Cabarrus ; Madame Hamelin ; brilliant Madame de Staël who had returned from exile in England with the establishment of the Directory ; the beautiful and witty Madame Récamier ; and Josephine Bonaparte, wife of a young Corsican general fighting on the Italian front, whose first husband, General Beauharnais, had met his death at the hands of the Revolutionary Tribunal. But Theresia Tallien, mistress of head-director Barras, was the real queen of this new society—exotic Theresia who drove through the streets in a wine-coloured chariot, and not only set the fashion in the scantiness of modish feminine attire but also in post-revolutionary manners.

In this altered city already excitedly talking of the military genius of young General Bonaparte, and as yet unaware of the talent of a red-haired priest named Fouché living with his wife, an ugly ex-nun, in the abject poverty of a garret, Catherine struggled to readjust herself to a new life. Desperately she tried, but it was a heartbreaking business. Most of her friends, among them the Vicomte de Lambertye, were *émigrés* in foreign lands ; many, like poor Valdec Delessart, had perished in the Terror. Only a mere handful of the acquaintances of her old life were left in or had returned to Paris, and even these she dared visit but seldom. Spies and detectives were everywhere, waiting like vultures to pounce on suspected Royalists or those in league with *émigrés* abroad. She was not anxious to attract the attention of the police. In London and Hamburg she had been in close association with those

despised Royalists who had quitted France during the Revolution, and she had managed to re-enter Paris again only by a back door, as it were, and under a false name. Small wonder then that she chose to live very quietly, almost in semi-retirement, in a modestly furnished *hôtel* which she rented in the Rue Saint-Vicaire, and that she was very frightened and rather sad and often very lonely.

II

"I swear by all the gods that I have lost all taste for public life and that nothing on earth can induce me to meddle with it again." Thus had Monsieur de Talleyrand, ex-Bishop of Autun, remarked to Madame de Genlis in Hamburg. This high-sounding pledge might have altered the career of any man but Charles Maurice de Talleyrand. To him, however, whose vows of celibacy formed no barriers to the enchantments of the fair sex and whose sophistries could allay any pricks of conscience, the breaking of such a resolution was but a minor obstacle to overcome. In all things he was the perfect opportunist, riding rough-shod over every rule of behaviour and morality that barred the road to success. No sooner, therefore, did he set foot in France again, when he decided to launch his *barque* of Fortune on the first propitious tide.

The Paris which Catherine found so depressing was, at first, in no way encouraging to Monsieur de Talleyrand, though his return had caused a considerable stir. His wit was remembered by many a lady who had known him in the days of the old régime. Talleyrand, who used women as stepping-stones to success, wasted no time in reconquering them with his brilliance and his courtesies. Madame de Staël, in particular, soon had his *bons-mots* re-echoing through the Paris *salons*. She was his excellent friend. It had been

through her instigation that his name was struck off the roll of *émigrés*. Like a limpet to a rock he now adhered to her, for he could be most tender and ardent where his personal advantage was concerned. He bound himself, with veritable hoops of steel, to those who could be of use to him. So now, since he had a great temporary need of Madame de Staël, he clung to her. She was a friend of Barras, head of the government of France, a government so powerful that the crafty ex-Bishop of Autun had no objection to serving it.

Step by step, in the *salon* of Madame de Staël, this brilliant, profligate priest who owed the first start of his public career to an improper joke about the immorality of Paris made in the drawing-room of Madame du Barry, carefully planned his return to the political arena of a new France under the Directory. Cold, polished and ambitious for wealth and power, and with but one all-consuming passion, that of self-interest, he used finesse and the men and women who were his friends—particularly the women—to gain his end. Like a mole, warily, he worked underground, scheming, intriguing, planning. Steadily, through sheer force of intellect and judgment, he made his way to the surface.

France had not forgotten that Talleyrand had been a friend of Mirabeau, nor that he had been President of the Constituent Assembly which had organised the Revolution. The mass of the Convention were not opposed to having a former grand-seigneur in their company and the grands-seigneurs who were still in France decided that it would be an excellent thing for them if one of their own spirit got into power. Unfortunately the Directorate as a whole, though fully aware of Monsieur de Talleyrand's liberal views and of the fact that his hands were unpolluted by the blood of the Terror, looked askance at him. They were afraid of him, afraid of his brilliance, his cunning and his treachery. But Madame de Staël was determined to make

a minister of her friend, and cleverly she set about winning Barras over to her way of thinking. "My devotion to you is unchangeable," she wrote to Barras on one occasion, "and it alone has made me conceive the idea of becoming useful to you. . . . I am associated with a man whom you already know and who shares my feelings. He is a man of solid genius, bold but prudent. We are both determined to follow your fortunes. . . ."

When there was a rumour of a change of Ministry she took Talleyrand with her one night when she called on the head of the Directorate. The interview was not a success. Physically Talleyrand reminded Barras too much of Robespierre. He had the same stiff, unbending manner, the same hard mouth and glittering eyes, the same high protruding cheek-bones and tip-tilted nose. Suddenly, too, Barras thought of Mirabeau. Talleyrand, the grand-seigneur, ex-Bishop of Autun, had been Mirabeau's confidential friend and yet Mirabeau had called him "a vile base trickster." One would have to be careful with Talleyrand. He was too clever, too calm, too ostensibly indifferent. True, his ability amounted to genius. It would be difficult to find a diplomat better suited to manage the foreign policy of France. Yet he was treacherous and deceitful. A dangerous man.

In spite of these thoughts Barras broached the matter of Talleyrand's appointment to the Directorate. He was met with a storm of opposition from his colleagues. "This limp-foot without respect for his bishopric," declared one of the Directors, "is like a sponge which sucks up every liquid into which it is dropped, but unlike the sponge, never gives anything back." And Carnot said: "He brings with him all the vices of the old régime without having been able to acquire any of the virtues of the new. He has no fixed principles. He changes them as he does his linen and takes them according to the wind of the day—a philosopher when philosophy is the mode ;

a Republican now because that is necessary in order to become anything."

Talleyrand, courtier and wit, was not one jot discouraged by the obstacles to be surmounted. For the sake of appearances he did, sometimes, philosophise about the weariness and poverty of life and its utter hopelessness, and remark that only in death, perhaps, there was peace and quiet. But such disgruntled mutterings he murmured into the sympathetic ears of Madame de Staël. To her, too, he confided that the depths of the Seine were perhaps the best place to quench the fruitless desires of a mortal soul. After all, was not all life fleeting and temporary and therefore, what did it matter if——? Here Monsieur de Talleyrand gave a meaning shrug of his shoulders.

All this philosophising did not mean a thing to him except that Madame de Staël, who did not appreciate his macabre humour, took his word for the deed (two things which Talleyrand never confused—each being used for a different purpose), and rushed off to Barras.

"Barras, *mon ami*," she cried, hurrying into his study one night, her hair disordered, a wild look in her eyes. "Barras, *mon ami*, he told me he was going to throw himself into the Seine!"

"But who, madame? Who is going to throw himself into the Seine?" demanded Barras.

"I am talking of our poor Talleyrand," she cried. "Ah, *mon Dieu*, perhaps he is no longer alive! He has nothing in the world but ten louis."

"Has he no other resources? No friends?" asked Barras.

"Friends, indeed! I who am certainly his friend have gladly supported him until now. His expenses have been so small. He has not even hired a carriage since his return. But now—now——" Madame was on the verge of an attack of convulsions. Foam flecked her lips. She gripped both Barras's hands with all her might. "*Mon ami*, you

must make a minister of Talleyrand or I shall be in despair and kill myself," she cried. "Do this for me and you shall save us all. I am giving the Republic a valuable friend in the person of poor Talleyrand and shall be answerable for him till death."

Torn between pity for Madame's condition and a sudden concern for Talleyrand's life, Barras tried his best to soothe his friend and in his attempt to allay her fears committed himself to an indirect pledge. "Persuade your friend not to drown himself," were his last words to Madame de Staël, "for if he did it would no longer be possible to make anything of him. Perhaps we shall be able to utilise his talents for the Republic."

It was only a half promise, but it was something, and Madame rushed off to save Talleyrand from the Seine in which he really never had the slightest intention of drowning himself. But his trick had worked. He knew now quite positively from which side the wind was blowing. Calm as ever, his cadaverous face completely expressionless, he set about pulling strings while he waited for the apple of power to ripen on its bough. At the end of August 1797, the apple dropped into his lap. Talleyrand was himself again. As a representative of the Directory he took up his residence in the Hôtel Gallifet, Rue du Bac, the official home of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was an important man in the Government of France once more, for he had stormed and captured a key position.

CHAPTER II

I

IN HER SHABBY GREY HOUSE WITH ITS WROUGHT-IRON balconies, life was becoming daily more intolerable for Catherine Grand. Hours of endless monotony were wearing her nerves threadbare and her large blue eyes were often sad. She was desperately worried by the lack of money. True, she did possess a fair fortune, but that, unfortunately, was locked away in the vaults of the Bank of England, and she realised only too clearly that, to have brought it over to France, this new France so greedy and rapacious and given to mistrust, would have been sheer madness. To add to her miseries, there were the terrifying persecutions of spies and police. Whenever she thought of them she was filled with sickening dread. They mistrusted everyone, these police. Every time she went out of her house she was aware of being followed. Cristoforo Spinola, diplomat of the Republic of Genoa and her very good friend, had told her that he, too, was being watched. They suspected him, so Spinola believed on good authority, of being an agent of the Englishman, Malmesbury. . . . Ah, they were everywhere, those prying, cautiously watchful, peering eyes !

The passing weeks brought her no relief from her anxiety, in fact her fears grew in intensity. One evening, alone in her furnished apartments, the wildness of her troubled thoughts drove her into a fever of despair. Though her hands felt hot and clammy, she kept shivering as she paced

restlessly from one end of her drawing-room to the other. *Mon Dieu, mon Dieu*, would there never be an end to her misfortunes? And why was the night so still? The silence terrified her. It was so ominous, like an evil thing holding its breath, waiting to strike in the dark. . . . Perhaps down there in the street below her windows, spies were on guard. They were always watching. That very day, walking in the Gardens of the Luxembourg, she had been aware that she was being followed. Were they there again, those spies, watching outside her windows?

Softly, her small feet encased in satin sandals barely making a sound as she walked, she crossed to a door which led on to a small iron balcony. Opening it with a swift, fearful movement she half expected someone to come tumbling into the room. But there was no one on the balcony and the few passers-by in the street below did not so much as glance up at her windows. For a little while she stood peering down into the street cautiously. Then she turned back into the room and closed the door. Aimlessly she wandered about, touching an ornament here, stooping for an instant to bury her face in a bowl of flowers, rearranging a stool. Then, suddenly catching a glimpse of herself in a long mirror, she stopped and stood very still. For a moment her eyes shone with their old gaiety, and a smile of satisfaction lay on her small, warm mouth. She drew herself up to her full height and surveyed her reflection with sensual pleasure, fascinated by her own loveliness. Well she might have been, for, dressed with the utmost simplicity, the clinging folds of her gown only half-concealing her perfectly modelled limbs, and with her hair curled in a mode copied from ancient Rome, she looked as exquisite as Venus herself.

But the load of her anxiety bore down on her again and she turned from the mirror with an impatient sigh. Restlessly she began to walk back and forth, the

harmony of her face marred by fear and ennui. Would nothing stem the torrent of her misery? Would there never again be peace and happiness for her? Must she go on suffering loneliness and persecution for ever? . . . What if someone, anyone, denounced her to the police? It was easy—that sort of thing. It happened daily. And then—prison. Or perhaps—something worse!

She shuddered fearfully, her eyes dilating at the horror of her thoughts. Her hands fluttered to her throat and caressed the soft white skin. A great weakness came over her. Unsteadily she sank down in a chair. Her lips were bloodless, her eyes fixed in a terrified stare. Behind her, on the mantelpiece, a clock ticked with hideous persistency, each soft beat striking into her brain with the force of a hammer. Unable to bear that obstinate ticking a moment longer, she sprang to her feet and stood staring about her like an animal seeking a way of escape. Then suddenly she snatched up her cloak, flung it about her shoulders, and rushed out of the room. Two minutes later she was in a cab, hastening to her friend the Marquise de Saint-Croix, sister of Talon, the Attorney-General.

II

Monsieur de Montrond was the only guest in the drawing-room of the Marquise de Saint-Croix when Catherine, pale and trembling, entered it some time later that evening. As she stepped through the doorway, he was recounting a marvellous tale about the exploits of heroic General Bonaparte.

"What was it that you were saying of this Bonaparte?" Catherine asked him a few minutes later.

Montrond's wicked little eyes glinted with anticipated amusement as he looked at her anxious face. But he

answered in a grave voice. "It is rumoured that Bonaparte is about to invade England," he said.

Catherine gasped and grew paler still. "Invade England!" she cried.

"Do not believe him," interrupted Madame la Marquise. "It is only another of Montrond's stories!" She knew that venal roué and his malicious wit only too well. It never disturbed her, but it always disturbed Catherine.

Montrond pulled an even graver face. "No, indeed, it is true, I assure you. Bonaparte will overrun the whole country from end to end and his soldiers will loot and plunder as they go."

"But the banks, monsieur! The banks will be safe?" cried Catherine.

He chuckled inwardly like a wicked imp. So she was worried about her fortune in the English bank? Well, he would tease her a bit. It was an amusing game. She was so ridiculously childlike in her credulity.

In mock horror he threw up his hands. "But, madame, surely you know it is the banks which the soldiers always pillage first," he admonished.

At this, poor, overwrought Catherine's self-control collapsed and she burst into tears. The Marquise de Saint-Croix tried to soothe and control her. "I assure you, *mon amie*, the banks are in no danger. Do not cry. You will only make yourself ill, and truly the whole thing is but one of Montrond's wicked jokes."

But Catherine could not be comforted with mere words. She continued to weep, and in her distress poured out all the grievous anxieties that lay so heavily on her heart. "What can I do? What is there for me to do?" she asked pathetically. "At every step I am watched and persecuted by spies. They do not leave me alone even for a single day. I am in the deepest despair, *mon amie*. In the deepest despair!"

"There seems only one thing that you can do," Madame

de Saint-Croix advised practically. "Go to citizen-Minister Talleyrand and tell him everything. He is the only man who can help you."

"Yes, indeed. There is no better thing that Madame Grand can do," chipped in Montrond. "And I, being Talleyrand's best friend, shall give her a note to take to him this very night."

Catherine dried her tears while he wrote his letter. Ten minutes later she was on her way to the Hôtel Gallifet to pay her visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Montrond's malicious little note nestled in the hollow between her breasts.

III

At the conclusion of the debate that evening, Monsieur de Talleyrand had gone to play cards with the Chevalier de Fénélon, at that gentleman's house. The game did not go well for Fénélon. He lost heavily, but in the hope of regaining his losses, forced the play to go on. Even when his pockets were empty, he was still not satisfied.

"Choose anything in this room and I shall stake it against that pin in your cravat," he said to Talleyrand at two o'clock in the morning.

"Anything at all?"

Fénélon nodded.

Talleyrand looked about him. "I should like that," he said, pointing to a small silver urn of delicate workmanship.

Fénélon turned pale. Through trembling lips he muttered dully: "You have chosen the one thing from which I dare not part."

"Ah, well then, let us call the game off," said Talleyrand.

"No!" Fénélon cried out sharply. "The game goes on! We shall play. I stake that thing against your cravat pin."

The Minister of Foreign Affairs shrugged his shoulders and sank back in his chair. The game began. Fénélon lost. Beads of perspiration broke out on his forehead. His hands shook. His breath came in choking sobs. Noticing his distress Talleyrand offered to return the stake that he had lost, but scarcely had the words left his lips when the Chevalier snatched the ornament wildly from his grasp.

"By the Lord! I am a fool," he cried. "I played for nought but the urn. 'Twas the urn I lost, not the contents." With this he tore open the lid, drew a small glass vase from the interior and violently dashed it to pieces against the chimney-piece. The contents, a fine shower of dark ashes, trickled like sand from a broken hour-glass into the fire. In these moments the man seemed half insane. Fearful of displeasing him further, Talleyrand placed the urn under his arm and took his departure.

It was under a light in the Rue de Montpensier that he first noticed the inscription on the urn. "C. H. March 17. Mercy and forgiveness—Miserere," he read. In that instant the whole gruesome tragedy connected with the urn, which he had completely forgotten, rushed into his mind. How clearly now he remembered everything—the beautiful Countess H., her husband's blinding jealousy and his death, finally, at Fénélon's hands. And then—ah, yes, now he remembered—the lady, in utter hopelessness, had retired to a convent. There she had died. She had left a will and in that will a legacy for her lover. At her request her body was to be opened after death and the heart reduced to ashes and then sent to Fénélon, "so that when he dies it may repose within his coffin, for it is his own."

Greatly distressed by these recollections and filled with gruesome horror, Talleyrand hastened on his way. Perplexity and fatigue tormented his mind. He longed for the peace and friendliness of his own chamber. But when



TALLEYRAND

By Isabey

he entered the front door of the Hôtel Gallifet he was met by his Swiss servant, Joris.

"There is a lady to see you, citoyen-Minister," said Joris.

"At this hour of the morning?" rapped out Talleyrand angrily.

"She has been waiting since ten o'clock, citizen-Minister. Her business, she says, is of great importance. She has brought with her a letter from Citizen Montrond."

"What is her name?"

"Madame Grand, citizen-Minister."

"Grand . . . Grand," muttered Talleyrand. Ah, yes, now he remembered. He had met her in Hamburg. A very beautiful woman. Exquisite. . . . But what could she be wanting at the Hôtel of External Relations at this hour? Joris said she had been waiting since ten o'clock. It was now past three. Five mortal hours! . . . Before his all-consuming curiosity, Monsieur de Talleyrand's fatigue and annoyance dissolved like mist at dawn.

"Madame Grand is waiting in the study, citizen-Minister," said Joris.

IV

The study was silent and shrouded in shadows. One light only was burning, a rose-shaded lamp which rested on the chimney-piece. In the open doorway Talleyrand stood blinking in the uncertain light. Only after a lapse of several moments did he perceive the figure of a woman seated in a deep arm-chair before the fire. Walking stiffly with his halting, uncertain gait, he approached her. She did not move. Madame Grand was sound asleep.

Talleyrand's small eyes sparkled amusedly in his thin face. He raised his hand to his mouth and coughed several times, softly. Still Madame did not stir. Wearied by

her emotions and the long hours of waiting for his return, she slept peacefully, curled like a kitten in the chair.

Hoping that his movements would wake the lady, Talleyrand fidgeted about the room. So it was that he came to the low table on which lay a letter addressed to him. He picked it up, opened it and stood smiling as he read Montrond's note of introduction. That man was an incorrigible jester. Would his insatiable love for practical jokes never find an end? wondered Monsieur de Talleyrand. . . . Again he turned to look at the sleeping woman. He moved closer and peered down at her, but the hood of the wide mantle which almost completely enveloped her figure, hid her face from his eyes. He straightened his back and in that instant become aware of Joris standing near the door, on the verge of an explosion of laughter. The novelty of the situation in which his master was placed had proved too much for the servant's sense of humour. Talleyrand stiffened. With a peremptory wave of his hand he dismissed the tittering Swiss. Joris rushed from the room and in his haste to escape from a position that was fast becoming untenable, closed the door behind him with a clattering bang.

Wakened out of her deep sleep by so fierce a noise, Catherine started to her feet in alarm and stared wildly about her, a cry of terror on her lips. It took her several seconds to collect her scattered senses and to realise where she was. But suddenly catching sight of Talleyrand her fear and shocked surprise vanished in an instant. With a swift, graceful gesture she threw back her hood. Abashed and smiling tremulously, she stood before him, her face transfused with blushes.

The whole incident was over in a matter of moments, but in those moments Catherine's charming confusion and loveliness produced a curious effect on Monsieur de Talleyrand. This venal, blasé, cynical man of the world, so surfeited with the attachments of brilliant women,

felt himself for an instant completely deprived of his self-possession. Almost as confused and embarrassed as she, he stood looking at her, dumb with admiration. He had not remembered that she was so beautiful. The whole picture of her indelibly stamped itself on his senses—her soft, delicately moulded features, her large, unfathomably blue, languishing eyes, her small red mouth, her golden hair playing in curls on her dazzlingly white forehead. . . . But the moment passed and Monsieur de Talleyrand recovered himself. He held out his hand and uttered polite, conventional phrases as he led her to a comfortable settee. Seating himself on a low chair at her feet, he begged her to tell him everything that Montrond had but half told in his letter.

"Ah, monsieur, forgive me for my intrusion at this singular hour, but I am in most desperate straits," she began, her eyes filling with tears. "I have such a great need of your help."

"I beg you to confide all your troubles to me, madame, and I shall do whatever is in my power to help you," he assured her.

With a rush of words she related the whole story of her fears and anguish. One moment her eyes were round and innocent as a child's, the next they brimmed over with tears. Never before, thought Talleyrand, had he seen a woman look so lovely when she cried. With gallantry and subtly expressed admiration he comforted her, persuading her to continue the story of her troubles and alarms. Of Montrond's joke concerning Bonaparte's intended invasion of England, she spoke with so artless a credulity that he found himself more fascinated than amused by her *naïveté*.

"You must understand, monsieur, that the greater part of my fortune and the whole of my plate and jewels are lodged in the Bank of England," she told him. "What is to become of me if Bonaparte abandons it to the pillage

of his victorious troops as a reward for their valour, and I am left destitute."

Hither and thither, like moths about a candle, flitted Talleyrand's thoughts as, tearfully and ingenuously, she unburdened her sorrows to him! . . . It was scandalous of Montrond to have played such a joke on her! The man was as shameless as the devil and she credulous as a child. She was, veritably, the dupe of her own terrors, and in that state when one is ready to believe anything. . . . But Montrond—that fellow would trip up on his own pranks one day. . . . And yet, the situation was really ridiculously amusing. One could not help chuckling a little at the whole stupid affair. . . .

Madame Grand had come to the end of her story and now, full of ardent solicitation, he turned to her. "I beg of you to calm your fears, madame, and trust me," he soothed her. Her lips were quivering like those of a child on the verge of tears, he noticed. He patted her hand consolingly.

"Then you will help me, monsieur?" she asked eagerly.

"I will, indeed," he answered with passionate earnestness.

"I assure you that no harm will come to you or your fortune. Only trust me."

"Ah, monsieur, I do! Indeed I do! Implicitly!" she cried. "I am most deeply indebted to you and am ever, ever your friend."

Now she smiled. When Catherine smiled through her tears she was lovelier than ever. Within his breast Talleyrand's cold, selfish, venal heart began to flutter like a sleepy hawk. His eyes met hers admiringly. He bent his head and kissed her hand.

But Catherine's mood was, for the moment, more susceptible to his power than to his admiration. Innocently she turned the conversation again to her own perplexed anxieties. Could he not give her some concrete assurance of safety? she asked. A letter, for instance? Anxious to

please her, and much too gallant to disclose to her that she was the dupe of Montrond's fun, he sat down at his desk and drew up a note of security. It was a preposterous document which assured the safe delivery of her plate and jewels and fortune into the hands of any person she chose to appoint to receive them, in the event of Bonaparte's triumphant army entering the city of London! But Catherine was delighted with it.

Her nerves soothed and her fears allayed, she left the Hôtel Gallifet just before dawn. The absurd letter of security which Talleyrand had so pompously signed and sealed, nestled against her heart. With awe and veneration she thought of Monsieur de Talleyrand, Minister of Foreign Affairs. She felt happy, for, since he had given her his promise that she would come to no harm, she was no longer afraid.

v

For a long time after she had gone, Talleyrand remained in his study, lost in thought. . . . Absurd how that ridiculous security had served to quiet her nerves. Heavens above, was there ever such an incredibly credulous creature as this Madame Grand! . . . If Montrond's story got about among the wits there would be no end to their laughter. All Paris would be full of the tale. Well, he certainly had played up splendidly to Montrond's joke. . . . *Pardi*, how tantalisingly lovely she was! In this world so full of scheming women like Theresia Tallien and Madame de Staël it was refreshing to meet so simple, ingenuous and trusting a creature as this Madame Grand. Her unsophisticated sophistication was adorable! . . . He must see more of her. Suddenly he regretted that he had ever embarked on an *affaire de cœur* with Madame Delacroix. Bah, the woman was so mature, and nothing more than merely

good looking. She could not hold a candle to Catherine Grand.

Dawn was breaking in the sky when Talleyrand at last limped up the long corridor to his bedchamber. He was filled with a curious excitement that amused his cynically analytical mind and yet stirred his heart not unpleasantly. For this audacious minister of France, ex-bishop and profligate roué, who had successfully resisted the alluring wit and refined elegance of many a great lady, now found himself strangely intrigued and fascinated by the beauty and *naïveté* of a courtesan, by her eyes and her little tip-tilted nose and the scent of her golden hair.

CHAPTER III

I

TALLEYRAND WASTED LITTLE TIME BEFORE SETTING off to the Rue Saint-Vicaise to pay his respects to Catherine Grand. The days that followed found him a frequent visitor at her apartment and before long her curiously childlike personality caused the matured charms of Madame Delacroix to pale and lose their meaning for him. Besides, the wife of Charles Delacroix was no longer an asset, and Talleyrand made short work of those who, one way or another, were of no benefit to him. During the first months after his return to France, in the days when her husband held the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Madame Delacroix had been most useful and had served him almost as well as—indeed, in some respects a great deal better than—Madame de Staël. He had become her lover. Madame, though fond enough of her husband, was far from happy in her married life for, unfortunately, Charles Delacroix suffered from a complaint which made it impossible for him to become a father. While she was playing her passionate game with Talleyrand, Charles, however, got himself restored to normal health. But Fate was having a little joke with Charles, and, though he regained his health he lost his ministerial office. It was Monsieur de Talleyrand who, in his place, became host at the Hôtel of External Affairs. Six months later Madame presented him with a son. At this society tittered scandalously. Only a few staunch friends were filled with

silent sympathy for poor Delacroix who had so summarily been displaced by Talleyrand both in the Directorate and his wife's good favour.

But all that had taken place a long time ago, and much had happened since. Madame Delacroix had served her purpose. After his nocturnal meeting with Catherine Grand, her reign came to an abrupt end. Not only was Catherine far more beautiful than she, but Catherine, too, he realised, might prove useful to him. Had she not naïvely confessed to a secret correspondence with the Vicomte de Lambertye in London? Besides, she possessed a goodly fortune locked safely in the vaults of the Bank of England and Talleyrand had a great respect for money. So he began to visit the hôtel in the Rue Saint-Vicaise regularly. Occasionally, too, Catherine lunched or dined at the Hôtel Gallifet. Sometimes she stayed the night. In the mornings when she awoke she appeared to him lovelier than ever.

The months passed . . . he rented a house for Catherine at Montmorency. On the ninth day of every ten he went there and stayed until the first day of the next ten. He was very happy there. Because he was not fond of solitude the house was filled with guests. These visitors were carefully selected, only those people who were amusing and harmonious or politically necessary to Monsieur de Talleyrand, were invited. Theresia Tallien and Josephine Bonaparte frequently appeared in the Montmorency drawing-room—the one because she was the mistress of Barras, the other because she was the wife of a pale-faced Corsican general whose genius the far-sighted ex-Bishop of Autun had already fully recognised.

Montmorency provided its guests with excellent food and wine and amusing entertainments. Frequently good amateur musicians gave concerts there or actors staged tragedies and farces. Sometimes the evenings were passed in the playing of innocent games for pledges and forfeits.

Catherine's favourite blindman's-buff held premier place in these artless recreations. To please her the wily citizen-Minister many an evening jumped about clumsily on his thin unsteady legs, his eyes blindfolded but his wits as nimble and crafty as ever. But it was the gambling banks—Birribi, Roulette, *Rouge et Noir* and Pharo—which were the most popular of the Montmorency diversions. Organised by the host and hostess, these banks more than paid for the luxuries of the table and the upkeep and expenses of the house.

II

Lulled into security by the power of her new protector, Catherine, all through these pleasant months, continued her friendship with Cristofero Spinola and, as often as she dared, wrote to the Vicomte de Lambertye in London. Mischievously she told him of her association with Talleyrand, unkindly referring to the august citizen-Minister by a nickname. She called him l'Abbé Piécourt. Piécourt—the limpfoot—was ever at her side, she wrote to Lambertye. He was ready to lay his sceptre at her feet. . . . Monsieur de Talleyrand did not know of the undignified nickname which she had bestowed on him, but he was quite aware of the secret correspondence with Lambertye. In fact, he encouraged it, for it was by this means that, indirectly, he kept in touch with England, particularly with his old friend Robert Smith, clerk of the Treasury.

The police, meanwhile, had neither forgotten Cristofero Spinola nor Madame Grand. They were still watching; still waiting. Convinced that Spinola was a conspirator, they inferred that the lady was his associate. True, she was the friend of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but Talleyrand himself was a cunning fox. One never quite knew what tricks he might play. It was wise to watch and wait.

One day, having as usual written her letter to Lambertye, Catherine gave it to Spinola to smuggle out of France. He passed it on to a secret courier. But the courier had a friend and the friend stole the letter. When he had read it from end to end he sent it to the Directory, to Minister Laréveillère in fact, who hated Talleyrand as he hated the devil. Though the letter in no way compromised the Minister of Foreign Affairs politically, Laréveillère locked it away carefully among his secret papers. It was a weapon that might prove very useful in his dealings with that haughty limpfoot, Talleyrand. Spinola, however, was immediately arrested. A sentence of expulsion was pronounced on him and he was bundled off to England. Meanwhile, too, the police had visited Madame Grand at Montmorency.

She held her head high when the captain of the police showed her his warrant for arrest. "On what charge, I pray you?" she demanded imperiously, looking him full in the face.

"Of trafficking with the enemies of the Republic," he replied.

"You are insane, captain. I command you to order your men to leave my house immediately." But her throat felt dry as she uttered these words, and her head was reeling.

"Come, citoyenne. Not so much fuss. We have letters——"

"Written by whom?" she cried sharply.

"By Citoyenne Grand to the Vicomte de Lambertye, enemy of France," came the short reply.

"It is false. I can explain all," she protested.

"No doubt. And you will have an opportunity to explain. But not here. Come, citoyenne."

She tried to speak but no words came. An awful nausea of fear swept over her. She put out her hand to steady herself and the next instant collapsed in a heap on the floor. Of what happened after this she had but a

blurred impression. When at last her senses cleared the hideous reality of prison walls encompassed her. She sat huddled in misery, past all thought and only semi-conscious through fear. For two long nights she did not sleep.

But neither did Monsieur de Talleyrand. On the very night of her arrest he wrote to Barras.

"CITIZEN DIRECTOR,

"Madame Grand has just been arrested as a conspirator. She is the person in all Europe the furthest from and the least capable of embarking on an affair of this kind. She is a very lovely Indian, very indolent and the idlest woman I have ever met. I beg your influence on her behalf, for I am sure not even a shadow of a pretext can be found against her or against putting an end to this affair to which I shall be sorry to see publicity given. I love her and I declare to you, as man to man, that never in her life did she meddle, or has she been capable of meddling, in any business whatever. She is a genuine Indian and you know to what a degree this species of womankind is a stranger to intrigue.

"Greetings and attachment,

"CH. MAUR. TALLEYRAND."

Thus disdainfully did the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who at this stage imagined himself truly in love for the first time in his life, write of his lady. His nature was a cesspool of hypocrisy and brutal cynicism. These qualities were to him what familiar imps are to a sorcerer. So he could never abstain from ridiculing or expressing contempt even for those most near and dear to him. Still he had written to Barras, written urgently, and anxiously he awaited the result of his plea.

III

Paris seethed with gossip about the intrigue. The Press flaunted the story and though Talleyrand managed to subdue the friendly newspapers, there were others which even he could not reduce to silence. These persisted in their clamorous agitation. One went so far as to publish a picture of the august Minister of Foreign Affairs with the portrait of his mistress, in place of the episcopal cross, dangling on his breast, while from his pockets, in a great cascade, tumbled the letters written by Catherine to Lambertye.

Barras, meanwhile, had not neglected Talleyrand's strangely expressed entreaty to come to Catherine's aid. With the best of intentions and the friendliest feelings towards the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he acted promptly and brought the matter before a small body of the Directorate. Under the impression that the case could be treated with the kind of contemptuous indifference with which Talleyrand had imbued it, he asked quite simply that Catherine be set at liberty. His demand raised a hornets' nest and was met by a passionate outburst from his colleagues.

There were gathered together at this impromptu meeting which Barras summarily convened, some of the most violent of Talleyrand's opponents in the Directory, namely, Reubell, Laréveillère and Merlin. All three of them were burning to oust the Minister of Foreign Affairs from his office. Reubell opened the attack, speaking in the name of virtue and morality.

"Citizens and colleagues," he began, in a white heat of passion, "when the National Convention struck from the list of *émigrés* the name of Talleyrand, he asserted that he had spent the days of his exile from France in the

United States and had enjoyed the friendship of the illustrious chiefs of the American Republic. Well then, I now ask if the morals practised by him in this country are those he received an example of at the hands of the Washingtons and Jeffersons? . . . What does he take us for that he should dare to come and make a display of his cynicism? . . . This wretched unfrocked, or rather still frocked priest, who, not content with being the vilest of libertines, cannot gratify his desires in France—which certainly is not lacking in strumpets—must needs go and seek one in England, and one of those to boot whom Englishmen import from India, just as they import wines from Oporto, which would not be strong enough were they not subjected to several sea voyages. Talleyrand would not enjoy life unless spiced with a scandal proclaimed from the house-tops. . . . I demand that the appointment of this impudent priest be cancelled.”

Said Merlin of the protruding teeth: “My dear colleagues, I fail to discover any excuse for Talleyrand from the moral point of view, and were it possible to find an excuse for him, looking at him as a private individual, it might perhaps result in aggravating his case as a political person. For after all, as said by our colleague, women are not scarce in France, supposing that our passions called for them. There are so many of them, all lovely, kind and excellent.” He paused for an instant, smirking at his colleagues, as if in subtle petitioning for forbearance in personal trifling sins to which he would rather have enjoyed admitting.

Reubell, quick to interpret that half-supplicating affected smile, snapped out sharply: “But you are, like ourselves, a married man, hence you do not require being forgiven mistresses you have not. If, however, you wish to appear a Céladon in order to acquire rights to indulge, tell us what there is to be told. Let us hear all about your lady-killing exploits.”

Merlin's lips drew back in a thin malicious snarl. "All that I can say about myself," he declared sourly, "is that when I have the pleasure of possessing a woman, not only do I not boast of the fact, but I do not admit it; much less do I name the lady. . . . Since, then, we all agree that France is not lacking in lovely, accommodating women, why, if one desires the need of them, should one go and seek them in British India? There is in this something, I must confess, which seems to me to leave the private domain and belong altogether to that of politics. Who will guarantee us that this alleged gallant liaison of Talleyrand with this loved woman is not a political liaison, of which love is only the officious screen? Who is there, in short, to guarantee that Madame Grand, owing to her disrepute, was not for that very reason looked upon as the woman who could best don the appearance of a gallant rôle intended to conceal the rôle of political falseness? Lastly, that Talleyrand, against whom so many patriots have brought the charge, is not a man sold to England, an actual agent of England, of whom Madame Grand is only the intermediary packet boat? I therefore ask that, instead of restoring liberty to the woman Grand, the Minister of Police be instructed to question her himself, very closely. This affair should be proved to the quick. We cannot close our eyes to what Talleyrand really is. In order to catch Talleyrand *in flagrante delicto*, we must, however, appear to look upon the matter as one of slight importance, so that he may be less on his guard; nay, we must go so far as to receive him kindly when he comes before the Directorate on ministerial business. If, as I hope, we succeed in unearthing the plot, we will make a striking example of him, and after dismissing him we will send him for trial before a military commission. Madame Grand naturally falls under the cognisance of such a tribunal since she is an *émigrée* who has returned to France."

For some time during this long speech of Merlin,

François de Neufchâteau had shifted uneasily in his chair. Remembering his own ever-recurring peccadilloes he felt hot and uncomfortable. Now suddenly he jumped to his feet. "The Directory has undoubtedly a right to keep an eye on the political conduct of its agents," he thundered, "but it has no right to meddle with their private life. That is a sanctuary."

Reubell looked at him curiously. So the young man's conscience was pricking him. A pretty way to plead one's own case. De Neufchâteau was a fool. A great fool. . . . But before he could speak, virtuous, narrow-minded Laréveillère had jumped up and held the floor, his heart afire with hatred against Talleyrand.

"Citizen colleagues," he shouted, "Talleyrand is doing in this instance only what he has done all his life : he screens his intrigues with his licentiousness, or his licentiousness with his intrigues. It all amounts to the same thing. His double-faced character is, as a matter of course, open to suspicion in regard to all he does and in connection with everything." On and on went Laréveillère in this strain, lashing himself into so great a fury that his eyes started from his head and his body trembled. With equal violence he fulminated against Talleyrand's libertinism and the Church of Rome.

At last Barras brought him to silence. "It seems to me," said Barras, "that we are all agreed at least upon one thing, to throw light upon this affair, in order to be able better to judge of it. Hence the first thing to be done is, so I move, to refer it to the Minister of Police."

This motion, after some debate, was carried.

Three days later, in spite of the denunciations and vituperative explosions of Merlin, Laréveillère and Reubell, the prison gates were opened for Catherine Grand. All her private papers which had been confiscated, were handed back to her. She returned to Montmorency. Such was the power and genius of Talleyrand.

For a little time longer the scandal steamed and bubbled like water boiling in a kettle. Then gradually the vessel of opprobrium boiled itself dry. Barras, believing "that it was still a far cry from a greatly relaxed morality in private life to political treachery," was firmly of the opinion that Talleyrand was incapable of treason. But with a section of the Directorate the Minister of Foreign Affairs was in worse odour than ever.

IV

Though once again surrounded by the liberty of Montmorency, Catherine was neither happy nor at peace. Close about her pressed the horrors of the prison from which she had so recently escaped. Her nights were made hideous by dreams. The shadow of anxiety stalked her by day. She was often in tears. At every unfamiliar sound her heart began to thump suffocatingly with apprehension.

"*Mon ami*, I shall die," she declared repeatedly to Talleyrand. "I cannot live in this uncertainty. What am I to do? Where am I to go? I pray to *le bon Dieu*, but He does not seem to hear me." Then she wept like a child, burying her face in her hands.

Talleyrand always listened to her quite quietly, as was his wont, his lazy glance now resting on her hair, now on her white throat. But when she began to sob as if her heart would break, he soothed her paroxysms of grief with ardent promises and protestations. He could be very gentle if he chose. . . .

Catherine's belief in Talleyrand's power intoxicated her senses. She no longer thought of him mischievously and rather unkindly as l'Abbé Piécourt. She could no longer look at him dispassionately. She felt a peculiar reverence

for him which, though at first influenced by her head, now completely dominated her heart. He stood before her, strangely transformed by her gratitude. For the first time in her life she began to regret her past. She longed to cut herself off from it for ever. She wanted to begin a new life, a life linked with the fortunes and fate of Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, ex-Bishop of Autun.

But preceding all other things in time and importance, was the dire question of preventing a repetition of that dreadful prison episode. Eagerly, and knowing that he would find a solution, she turned to Talleyrand for help. He was quick to evolve a scheme. There was only one way of setting about the business, he averred. She must without further delay supplicate the favours of the Directory. He himself drew up and endorsed the petition which she submitted. In it the fact that she had been born in a Danish colony in India of French parents was carefully pointed out. Furthermore, the document asserted that, though she had married an English official, the unhappiness which he had caused her had been so great that, through him, she had lost all her affection for England. Under the circumstances, therefore, it was indeed a tragedy that she should have been suspected of acting as an agent of that country. Her greatest desire in life was to sever her connection with Great Britain finally and for ever by divorcing a husband of whom she had heard no single word in five long years. Most humbly she beseeched the Directorate to consider her petition and to grant her request for divorce, for by this means only would she be able to break with the past completely. . . .

At this very time, in distant India, George François Grand was seriously beginning to contemplate a visit to England. Fate had been meting out harsh treatment to him of recent years, and, though he looked prosperous, for he had grown enormously fat, he was very much down on his luck.

When first he had left Calcutta for Patna, fortune had favoured him liberally. Within a comparatively short time he had risen from the position of Commercial Assistant to the Factory to that of Governor of the Provinces of Tirhoot and Hajepore. At Tirhoot he had acquired large private indigo interests and had grown extremely prosperous. But alas, on the arrival of Lord Cornwallis in India, he was summarily dismissed from office by "one stroke of his lordship's pen" and, in addition, was forced to give up his indigo concerns! When, turning rancorous, he had opposed law and authority with contempt—he had become excessively quarrelsome and infinitely more self-important than ever before—he was charged for his misdemeanours. "Possibly there might have been errors of form in my administration," he admitted in writing years later, "but I dared my worst enemy to come forward with any accusation involving or bordering on criminality."

Finding it impossible to gain redress for his grievances in India, he began a wordy and lengthy correspondence with the Court of Directors in England. But his repeated appeals were of no avail. For a time poor Grand went from pillar to post in an attempt to earn a livelihood. At one period he was on the jury of Calcutta; at another he acted as a commissioner for the scheme of a lottery; still later he was appointed to the position of officer in charge of despatching the mail-packet for Europe at Diamond Harbour. At last he began seriously planning a voyage to London in order to seek redress for his grievances personally from the Court of Directors of the East India Company.

It was at this time that Catherine sent her petition for divorce to the Directory. She had little difficulty in getting her plea conceded, since the revolutionary law granted dissolution of marriage contracts on the flimsiest pretexts. So, though she was a Catholic united in matrimony to George François Grand according to both the

Catholic and Protestant rites, her marriage to him was annulled on the 7th of April, 1798, in the Town Hall of the Second Arrondissement of Paris. From now on she no longer merely "frequented" the Hôtel Gallifet. She went to live there permanently and openly as Talleyrand's mistress. During these halcyon days Talleyrand was as deeply in love with her as it was possible for him to be with any human being except himself, and she, fortified with happiness, was determined to follow him and his fortunes wherever they might lead.

CHAPTER IV

I

ON THE 19TH OF FEBRUARY, 1800, NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, who had taken less than a decade to make himself the virtual master of France, took up his residence at the Tuileries as First Consul. "Come, little Creole," he said to Josephine that night in the bedchamber of the Kings of France. "Come. Get into the bed of your masters."

The magical career of this great little vulgar man of low stature had begun during the Revolution when, as the friend of that "sea-green incorruptible," Robespierre, he had won glory for himself in recapturing Toulon from the English. In those days he was a Jacobin. When Robespierre fell from power and shared the fate of his thousands of victims, Bonaparte too was arrested. The splendid military services which he had rendered to France, however, saved him from the guillotine, and he lived to become the protégé of Barras and Carnot. For them, with a "whiff of grapeshot," he not only defeated the October Revolution of 1795, but through its defeat ended the French Revolution completely so that it "became a thing that was." Then he began to dream. It was a strange, fascinating dream of power. No one knew of the visions that lay in his mind.

Barras and Carnot put him in command of the Army of Italy, but even before Campo Formio he wrote these burning words: "Do you think I triumph in Italy for the

glory of the lawyers of the Directory, a Carnot or a Barras? Do you suppose I mean to found a Republic? What an idea! A Republic of thirty million people! With our morals, our vices! How is such a thing possible? The nation wants a chief, a chief covered with glory." . . .

The lawyers of the Directory had seen in Bonaparte only a military genius. But shrewder and more far-sighted, Talleyrand saw deeper. From the very moment that he set foot in Paris again, he kept his eye on the Corsican. He realised from the start that Bonaparte was the real, the only "strong man" in the great political drama of France. Cunningly and systematically, therefore, he applied himself to win the confidence and friendship of the young Corsican general. And he succeeded as he always succeeded in everything on which he had set his mind.

With Talleyrand's flattering tributes ringing in his ears Bonaparte started on his Egyptian campaign in 1798. Josephine accompanied him to Toulon and from there proceeded to Plombières in the hope that, after two years of married life, the waters of this spa would make her conceive. Reubell, too, was at Plombières at this time. He was desperately sick. In his infirmity, he symbolised the depressed government of which he was a minister. For within recent times the Directory had fallen into grave disorder. Intrigues at home and abroad flourished and conditions in France were steadily growing worse.

His tongue in his cheek, Talleyrand, the father of changes in government, sat waiting for the deluge. With a damp finger he tested the strength of the rising gale and kept his eye on Bonaparte. An election came and he fell from office together with Merlin and Laréveillère. But the fall barely ruffled his calm exterior. His mind was much too busy with future events. When he moved from the Hôtel

Gallifet to a small house in a side street, Catherine did not desert him. She went with him to share his semi-retirement. At a window on the first floor of this house in the Rue Taitbout she stood beside him listening to the rising wind of discord and dissatisfaction which blew across France. Day by day the storm waxed fiercer. Now often in the streets cries of "Long live the *sansculottes*!" were followed in turn by even louder shouts of "Long live the King!" Like a jerry-built house in an earth tremor, the Directory rocked on its foundations. Reubell said that Talleyrand in his semi-retirement fell asleep at night reading lampoons about himself. But that was only partly true. For though there were lampoons enough to send him to sleep, actually he slept very little at this period. All day and half the night he was working, warily and silently as was his wont, preparing for that psychological moment when the Corsican would return from Egypt to strike an effective blow in French politics.

At last Bonaparte arrived. He went to live in a house which he had bought from Talma, the actor, in the Rue Chauteraine, recently renamed the Rue de la Victoire in his honour. His new home, filled with furniture that was decorated with symbols of war and victory most befitting to the conqueror of Arcola and Rivoli, delighted him. But he spent much of his time at Talleyrand's house in the Rue Taitbout. There, in the dimly lit study he would sit for hours on end, talking in a low voice of a mysterious project. Sometimes, with Roederer, Sieyès and Fouché he appeared in the drawing-room, where, to deaden the scent of conspiracy, Talleyrand sat playing whist with Catherine Grand and Madame de Cambis.

With the complicated machinations of political intrigue Catherine troubled her head but little. She was aware that the Government of France was tottering precariously

and that Bonaparte was waiting to glide into power. But Talleyrand saw to it that, concerning the comings and goings at the Rue Taitbout, she remained but half initiated. In his symphony of intrigue she had only one note to play, that of the beautiful and delightful hostess in his drawing-room, who flattered and charmed his guests with pleasing attentions.

So the weeks passed, till at last, on the night of the 15th Brumaire, the secret plottings, discussions and preparations came to an end. Everything was in readiness awaiting the zero hour. That arrived three days later at St. Cloud, where the Council of Ancients had summoned the Legislative Assembly. On that day, to the shouts of "*À bas les dictateurs*," Bonaparte, and with him Talleyrand, Sieyès and Fouché, effected a grand *coup d'état*. The Directory was dissolved. Fascinated by Bonaparte, the nation whole-heartedly approved this violent stroke of state policy and cheered lustily. Everywhere there was new hope that order and prosperity would again be restored to France. The five per cent *rentes* soared to seventeen. Talleyrand, with a nose for money, speculated and made a fortune. Bonaparte became the First Consul and Fouché "the policeman of the Quai Malaquais." And on the night of the 19th of February, when Josephine slept for the first time at the Tuileries in the bedchamber of the Kings of France, Catherine Grand was back in her old apartments at the Hôtel Gallifet. For Monsieur de Talleyrand was once again Minister of Foreign Affairs.

A new France had been born—France of the Consulate, which opened its arms wide to the Royalists who had fled during the Revolution. Catherine's name was struck off

the list of *émigrés* and it was decreed that in all official documents she was to be known in future as "Catherine Noël Werlée, by marriage Grand, native of Denmark." In addition, all her property which had been confiscated from her house in the Rue Mirabeau in 1792, was returned to her.

Having made his peace with the *émigrés*, Bonaparte turned his attention to the Church of Rome. Here, too, he deemed it politic to have complete and undisturbed harmony. So Monsignor Spina was invited to come from Rome to act as religious plenipotentiary, and in Paris churches once again opened their doors for public worship. But there still remained one thorn to be plucked from the rose of ordered relationship, namely, the ban of excommunication which teasingly pricked the august Minister of Foreign Affairs. Not only did Monsieur de Talleyrand desire annulment of this sentence, but he had set his heart, too, on complete secularisation. Unfortunately, on the latter question His Holiness Pope Pius VII did not see eye to eye with the ex-Bishop of Autun, and though he withdrew the ban of excommunication he did not find his way clear to restoring his "beloved son, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand" to the laity. In short, for all his scheming, the Minister of Foreign Affairs found himself, in the end, a priest again and an ex-bishop still bound by the strict vows of celibacy.

III

Josephine was now mistress of the Tuileries, but Catherine Grand was the châtelaine of the Hôtel Gallifet. Since Talleyrand had become the most important man in France after Bonaparte, the Hôtel of External Relations ranked next in consequence to the Tuileries. Indeed, Monsieur

de Talleyrand's *salon* blossomed into the most popular rendezvous in Paris. Some of the finest assemblies ever seen since the days of the old régime were held there. It became a sort of melting-pot in which the France of Louis XVI simmered amiably with the France of the Consulate. Bonaparte showed himself there occasionally, but Josephine came oftener and stayed longer. Here Sieyès talked with the Chevalier de Coligny; the Duc de Laval brought Madame the Duchess; Madame de Flahaut listened to the malicious wit of Monsieur de Montrond; young Eugène Beauharnais discussed the war with General Marat; and Admiral Bruix paid compliments to the Duchesse de Fleury. They were all there, all Talleyrand's friends. Only Madame de Staël did not come. A short, formal refusal to dinner had been Talleyrand's dismissal of this woman who had so splendidly helped him back to power four years earlier.

At these great feasts at the Hôtel Gallifet Catherine Grand was the presiding goddess who played hostess to this fine society. She was very gracious and, if not in wit at least in loveliness, she far outshone the grand ladies who fluttered around the brilliant Minister of Foreign Affairs, surfeiting his little dog Jonquille with sweets for love of him.

These days passed in great happiness for Catherine. Serenely beautiful, she would wander among the guests at the Hôtel Gallifet, dispensing hospitality; or calmly, her hands folded in her lap, she would watch Madame Vestris and Mademoiselle Chameroy dance Russian gavottes and listen to the great Garat and Madame Walbonne sing enchantingly for the pleasure of Monsieur de Talleyrand's visitors. She always wore magnificent clothes and jewels; she was present at all the first nights at the Opéra and the Vaudeville; she went walking in the Bois in spring, a tiny sunshade held above her head; she drove along the Champs-Élysées, indolently reclining in her carriage

drawn by two huge, spanking bays. When Talleyrand hired a lovely villa at Neuilly from Delannoy, the contractor, she found yet another excuse for happiness. The new villa became dearer to her by far than the ninety-nine columned Hôtel Gallifet in the Rue du Bac. It was here at Neuilly, after the Peace of Lunéville, that she helped Talleyrand entertain the hereditary Prince of Parma and his wife, who had been newly created King and Queen of Etruria. The grand feast which the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave at his summer villa in their honour, was a "triumph of genius," a triumph which Catherine shared with Talleyrand, for she was ever at his side dispensing the honours of his house. Never since the days of Marie Antoinette had so magnificent an assembly been seen in France. The fine park of Neuilly was transformed into a semblance of Florence, a fairyland Florence. Even a Pitti Palace gleamed among the trees. Fireworks starred the heavens and peasants danced among the flowerbeds. Supper that night was served three times in five rooms, and the whole magnificent entertainment came to an end with a brilliant ball which lasted till the morning.

The flower-embowered villa of Neuilly became Catherine's little court. There she reigned in state, receiving and entertaining the famous diplomatists, foreigners, politicians and men of letters who gathered about Bonaparte's illustrious Minister of Foreign Affairs like bees around a jar of honey. The fame of her select suppers spread far and wide. Stories were told of how "the Service was in Grecian style; nymphs with mythological names served the coffee from golden ewers, and perfumes burned in silver chafing dishes," and that, like an Eastern princess, Madame Grand was followed, wherever she went, by a retinue of richly attired Oriental servants.

In short, Catherine Grand was the talk of Paris. Linked with Talleyrand, she had become one of the most prominent women in France under the Consulate.

IV

At this time Catherine was in the prime of a beauty which, even more than Chance, had raised her to the position which she held in the household of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. For Talleyrand's passion for her was more than three-quarters sensual. He willingly forgave her her mental and spiritual shortcomings because of the indescribable pleasure which she gave to his senses. Physically he found her perfect. Her skin was smooth and clear as a pool of fresh water; her breasts round and firm as a virgin's; her complexion dazzling; her teeth small and regular; her eyes tender and languishing; her forehead white as a lily; her hair golden and exquisite as a diadem of state.

"Tell me," said Montrond to Talleyrand one day, "tell me what possible attraction can you find in the conversation of this woman with the pretty face?"

Talleyrand shrugged his shoulders. "What would you have me say?" he declared. "It is a recreation for me. She is a pleasing companion and as beautiful as a goddess. Besides, she refreshes me after Madame de Staël."

Catherine's nature was, indeed, a great contrast to the fiery temperament and genius of Necker's daughter. She was simple and good-humoured. In spite of her physical loveliness she was not glaringly vain. She enjoyed flattery and compliments rather as a child enjoys its toys. At this period of her life she was still too completely artless and unaffected to give herself airs. That

was to come later and as a result rather of the people about her than the exalted position which she attained. Not only did she, at this time, possess a childlike grace and carriage, but she had, too, a pretty manner of speech and delightfully gay and tender ways. She was always serene. In truth, she was much too indolent to fly into catastrophic furies. This trait in her nature particularly pleased the easy-going Talleyrand, who hated scenes above all things. Though he gave her provocation enough, since he took no pains to hide his infidelity to her, she but seldom indulged in tears of jealousy and certainly never in fits of hysteria verging on convulsions, such as he had become familiar with in his association with Madame de Staël. In these stirring days of the Consulate he had need of a restful companion, such a one as Catherine, who, by her good nature, her loyalty and abysmal indolence, satisfied him completely. For the time being he was perfectly content with her for, as he told a boon companion: "She has not sense enough to indulge in political intrigue and grace and beauty enough to do the honours of my house."

So admirable was Catherine's understanding of "*l'art de tenir son salon*," and so invaluable at this particular period was this talent of hers to Talleyrand, that he considered it infinitely more important than the *bons-mots* of the most brilliant women of France. So he chose her, instead of one of the grand ladies of social standing, to play Egeria at his receptions. To all who frequented his *salon* she showed herself gracious and charming. What did it therefore matter under the circumstances, said Talleyrand, if her knowledge and interests were limited? And if her conversation was not started with wit and brilliance—indeed, she was often guilty of errors in speech because of her unaffected simplicity and naïve manner of expression—yet she never displeased him by committing social blunders.

Of Catherine's beauty one opinion only—that of unequivocal admiration—was held in Paris. With regard to her mental faculties, however, there were two. The affected wits led by Montrond, and those who were jealous of her position in Talleyrand's house, declared that she never opened her mouth but something foolish came out of it. Others, on the other hand, who knew her really well, considered her lovable and neither ignorant nor stupid. Her conversation, they admitted, was not distinguished by its wit, but neither was it the silly conversation of a fool.

Talleyrand, wiliest than the wiliest, successfully turned the indirectly aimed shafts of ridicule away from himself by joining in the laughter of the scoffers, and himself frequently speaking mockingly of his mistress's foolishness and lack of understanding. "What would you have, she has as much sense as a rose," he would say, borrowing a phrase from Chamfort. Thus, slyly fostered by him, Catherine's stupidity became proverbial. It was almost as fashionable, at one time, to quote her "silly sayings," as to collect the *bons-mots* of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Society was prodigiously amused and asked for more, and to meet the demand, Montrond and his circle of malicious wits twisted her simplest remarks into the grossest imbecilities. Many a stupid "saying" was attributed to her which had never passed her lips, most famous of all being the celebrated phrase "*Je suis d'Inde*" which, as the answer to a question put to her about her nationality, was alleged to have been uttered by her as "*Je suis dinde*"—"dinde" being used in the same sense as goose.

Another story of Catherine's foolishness which had a great vogue in Paris, was connected with Denon, the Egyptologist. When he arrived in Paris soon after the return of the army from Egypt, Talleyrand invited him to dinner, instructing Catherine as to her behaviour

towards the great savant, in the following manner : " He is a very charming man, an author, and authors, you know, like to be questioned about their work. So I shall give you an account of his voyages and you must read it in order to discuss it with him."

The story then went on to tell how Talleyrand did indeed send a book to Catherine's apartment, but in error, instead of Denon's voyages, sent Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

On the night of the dinner, Denon was given the place of honour next to Madame Grand. " Ah, monsieur," she said turning to him eagerly, " I cannot express all the pleasure I found in reading your strange adventures."

" Madame, you are too kind," he answered.

" No, I assure you," she declared. " But how miserable you must have felt all alone on that desert island. I was specially interested in that."

Denon stared at her puzzled. " I think, madame——" he began.

But she interrupted him with a smile. " You must have looked very funny in your pointed hat," she whispered.

" Truly, madame, I—I don't understand——" Denon muttered in frantic bewilderment.

" Oh, but I *do* understand, all your trials and tribulations!" she answered in a voice trembling with sympathy. " How you must have suffered!"

" Indeed, madame, I—I don't know what—I can't——" he stammered in confusion.

" It must have been dreadful," she continued kindly. " How pleased you must have been the day you found Friday."

This story went the round of Paris society, indeed of all Europe. Yet, years later, when Talleyrand was questioned as to its authenticity, he replied : " It did not actually happen. The circumstance did not really occur as it has been represented, for I was there to prevent it.

However, it was guessed at and that was enough for the blunder to be ascribed to her without compunction."

Denon, in fact, became very kindly disposed to Catherine and out of friendship presented her with a charming little ape which she called Simia. Simia was an amusing creature, full of pretty pranks and cunning ways, and at the Hôtel of External Relations she soon rivalled the little dog Jonquille in popularity. Her amazing proficiency at sealing letters delighted even Monsieur de Talleyrand, with whom she became a prime favourite, spending many hours of the day gambolling about in his study. But it was Josephine Bonaparte who truly doted on the little ape. At last, after much persuasion, Catherine parted with her pet and Simia went to live at Malmaison as a token of Catherine's affectionate friendship for the wife of the First Consul of France.

But to return to the recital of Catherine Grand's alleged stupidities. If a statement is made often and loudly enough the world begins to believe it. So it was that soon Paris was firmly persuaded that, being beautiful, it was quite natural that Catherine must needs be very silly. She herself added fuel to this fire by often naïvely declaring that she was indeed a *belle-bête*. If she had been a great lady her innocently unaffected remark would, without doubt, have been considered extremely witty. Since, however, she was no *grande dame* it was merely looked upon as a further proof of her stupidity. But she was not the *belle-bête* she professed to be. Would Talleyrand have chosen her to play hostess in his *salon* if she had been completely devoid of sense? If she did not always behave with as much dignity as she might have done, that, for him, was part of her childlike charm. In reality she possessed a fund of common sense, and in no way was she inferior to "ordinary persons against whom no one ever thinks of bringing a charge of unusual stupidity." But fashionable society, particularly the wits and the women

friends of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, continued to hold her up to ridicule. They resented her position and mocked her because she lacked the traditions of Talleyrand's world. For Catherine, despite her social ornamentation and veneer, remained still, in her heart of hearts, the daughter of a minor official of Chandernagore who had been born with a golden spoon in her mouth.

CHAPTER V

EARLY IN THE YEAR 1802 ALL EUROPE WENT INTO wild rejoicing at the signing of a treaty at Amiens, which brought a temporary respite after long years of war between France, Spain and the Batavian Republics on the one side and England on the other. Paris, aflutter with flags by day and a fairyland of lights by night, was invaded by a host of famous foreigners anxious to enjoy its gaieties and pleasures, and the splendid fêtes and receptions given by the First Consul at the Tuileries.

Talleyrand, who had prepared the terms of the treaty, shared almost equally with Bonaparte in the honours of the peace, and all Europe paid him court with much respect and awe. His opinions were quoted everywhere. Visitors carefully jotted down his sparkling jests and witty sayings in their notebooks and poets inscribed their verses to him. Those who eagerly sought his society by frequenting the receptions at the Hôtel Gallifet, or by getting themselves invited to the *petits soupers* and *soirées* at the Villa Neuilly, had perforce to accept the presence of Catherine Grand, for at all Monsieur de Talleyrand's entertainments she was the presiding queen. Many a famous visitor was somewhat surprised at the weakness of so great a man as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in raising into prominence a mistress who had at one time been no better than a woman of the town. However, since she was not only beautiful to look at, but most cer-

tainly did the honours of his table and *salon* with extraordinary graciousness, the vast majority of guests felt that recognition of her position in his household was a small price to pay for the society of the wittiest of conversationalists, the greatest man in France after Bonaparte. Unfortunately, on this matter the ambassadresses from foreign courts thought otherwise. Even the glamour of Monsieur de Talleyrand could not console them for the fact that the woman who dispensed the hospitality of his house had been a courtesan of Paris. Point-blank, therefore, they refused to be received at the Hôtel Gallifet by Madame Grand. Their dissatisfaction spread like wildfire and, with the deliberate intention of doing harm to Talleyrand's prestige, Fouché brought the scandal to the ears of the First Consul. Fuming with anger, Bonaparte, who was fully determined to have his court steeped in outward respectability at least, sent for his Minister of Foreign Affairs. Once and for all he would put an end to this disgraceful public scandal.

The First Consul began the stormy interview which followed with a suggestion that Talleyrand should resume the episcopal robes or, better still, allow himself to be invested with the purple apparel of a cardinal. Talleyrand's reply, though icily courteous, was obstinately and unyieldingly in the negative. He did not consider himself fit for the priesthood, he maintained, and nothing whatsoever would induce him to re-enter the order again. Very well then, declared Bonaparte, that ended the matter. His Minister of Foreign Affairs might refuse to be made a cardinal, but, with regard to Catherine Grand, he would have to submit to convention and decency by instantly dismissing her from his house. At all costs, said the First Consul, he was determined to stamp the new Court of France with the seal of moral rectitude.

II

Selfish, unprincipled and shameless, it did not take Talleyrand long to make up his mind as to how he would act towards Catherine. Audaciously dissolute and with neither pity nor decency in his heart, he prepared to expel from his house the woman who had given him her fidelity and affection and four years of her life. Enough was enough, he mused. The woman had become a habit with him and it was high time that the habit was broken. Yet, because he remembered that he had found her very sweet and that her beauty and even temper, her child-like simplicity and indolence had once suited his easy-going nature, he covered the pill of dismissal thickly with the sugar of flattery and cajolement. But Catherine was quick to taste its bitterness. It was unthinkable and impossible for her, at this stage of her life, to be forced back into the precarious existence of a woman of the town. How could she let him break with her? What was to become of her if he banished her from his house? In the solitude of her apartment she abandoned herself hopelessly to her perplexity and grief. Before her tear-dimmed eyes she saw all the luxuries, triumphs and joys which had become the mainspring of her existence, and which Talleyrand alone could give her, crumble into dust. . . .

At this critical turning point in her life, when already her anxieties were more than she could bear, ghosts of her Calcutta youth that she had hoped were long since laid, suddenly appeared to add to her unhappiness. Unexpectedly and almost simultaneously Sir Elijah and Lady Impey, Mr. Philip Francis and Mr. Grand arrived in Paris.

To get Francis out of the way was a comparatively easy matter. Catherine wrote him a little note. She told him

of the position in which she was placed, vaguely hinted at the possibility of marriage with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and regretted that, in the circumstances, it was impossible for her to receive him, since she was most anxious not to offend Monsieur de Talleyrand. Francis replied in the most charming and courteous manner, declaring that "it was his pleasure to hear of any circumstance that would attribute to that happiness which she so well deserved and he so much desired to hear her possess, that her least wishes would always be laws to him and that he would not now or ever intrude upon her presence; except in case of any change of situation she would accept his services, when she would find his esteem and regard unaltered." Furthermore, aware that his presence in Paris might prove an embarrassment to her at this moment in her life, he cut his visit short and returned to England. In farewell Catherine sent him "a few elegant books," with the assurance that she would never forget him.

It was not quite so easy to get rid of Mr. Grand. Though she used a great deal of gentle persuasion, employing the wily Sir Elijah Impey who frequented the villa at Neuilly as intermediary, she failed to get Grand to pack his bags as gallantly as Philip Francis had done. Having comfortably established himself at the Hôtel du Cercle in the Rue de Richelieu, he declared that he had come to Paris with the express purpose of visiting its impressive monuments, and that, as yet, he was far from surfeited. Actually, however, the object of his visit was mainly concerned with securing a lucrative post through Catherine's influence with Monsieur de Talleyrand. Until he had got what he had come for, he refused to budge.

Realising that in his present mood the ex-Bishop of Autun would be only too glad and willing to return a long-lost wife to George François Grand, Catherine did her best to keep her ex-husband's presence in Paris from Talleyrand's knowledge, at least until she had made her final

effort to secure her position in the household of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This last effort was a hasty visit to the First Consul's wife at Malmaison. Josephine had been her good friend for many years ; they visited each other regularly ; and it was to Josephine that she had given her much-loved ape, Simia, as a token of deep affection. Into her friend's sympathetic ear Catherine, on this visit, poured the full philtre of her sorrow, imploring Josephine to plead her cause with the First Consul. Nobly the mistress of Malmaison rose to the occasion. By a private staircase she ascended to Bonaparte's cabinet and, having in a comparatively short time persuaded him of the urgency of the case, induced him to return with her to her apartments to hear Madame Grand's sad plea from her own lips.

Upon the entrance of the First Consul, Catherine fell on her knees before him in a flood of tears. A melancholy, meditative expression on his face, he stood quite still for a moment staring down at her trembling form. Then : " Well, madame ? " he demanded impatiently.

In silence she raised her face to his stern gaze. " H'm ! " muttered Bonaparte. " Rouge and tears—these two things are very becoming to a woman. . . . But come, madame. Speak."

His greyish-blue eyes never left her face for an instant while he listened to her story and passionate entreaties. Minute by minute his grim austerity softened. More eloquently than her entreaties and her tears did her beauty that day cajole him.

" Well, well, I see only one way out of this," exclaimed a curiously mild Bonaparte, at last. " Let Talleyrand marry you and all will be arranged. But you must either bear his name or leave his house." With these words he dismissed Catherine from his presence.

Hardly had she gone when he sent for Talleyrand. With calm deliberation he repeated his ultimatum. There was no time to lose, he declared. He would give his Minister

of Foreign Affairs twenty-four hours to make up his mind. To Talleyrand's argument that marriage for a bishop, even an ex-bishop, was unthinkable and that, without doubt, it would create an even greater scandal than the defamatory gossip which had resulted from his concubinage, he answered dryly: "Monsieur de Talleyrand, the Court of the Vatican can do anything." Since he could not make a cardinal he was determined to make a husband of Talleyrand. And much that he did was for Catherine's sake. Hers was the victory, for his cold stern heart had softened with sympathy under the spell of her beauty.

So there it was, almost as good as if it were written in black and white, Bonaparte's ultimatum to his Minister of Foreign Affairs, an ultimatum which would expire in twenty-four hours' time. Talleyrand returned to the Hôtel Gallifet much troubled by the promptness of the decision that was required of him.

III

Catherine spent the hours after her return from Malmaison in the hands of her hairdresser and her maids. Carefully she herself chose the jewels and the gown which she would wear, a gown of rich white satin and diamonds to set off the whiteness of her skin. Never had she looked more beautiful nor more alluring than she did this night which she knew well would see either her triumph or her downfall. Small wonder that she felt distressingly restless. Like a caged panther she paced up and down her boudoir when her toilette was completed. Nervously she twisted her handkerchief into a tight ball, ever and again raising it to dry the tears that, in her suffering and suspense, she could not control. There came a knock at her door.

"Madame, Monsieur de Saint-James desires to pay you his respects," said her maid.

De Saint-James? Yes, yes, she would see him. He was a good, dear kindly creature. It would relieve the agony of her mind to talk to him. . . . With tears and sighs she told him the story of her fears and anxiety. Then suddenly she looked at him beseechingly. "My friend, my good friend," she cried, clasping his hands, "you can help me. Indeed, you can. Listen. Monsieur de Talleyrand has returned from Malmaison. I know, for I asked the *valet de chambre*. He is in his study. Go to him, my kind friend. Speak to him on my behalf, appease him, imploring him not to send me away."

De Saint-James kissed her finger-tips. "I am at your service, madame. Always at your service," he said. The next moment he was gone. But in less than a quarter of an hour he was back again, looking sheepish and extraordinarily crestfallen. He could not meet her eyes.

"What is the matter?" she cried, rushing towards him. "What did he say? Monsieur, tell me, I pray you. Tell me."

"He will not hear me, madame. Nor you either. He says——"

"Yes, yes," she prompted impatiently.

"He says—enough is enough, and that he has made up his mind. I—I think, madame," stammered the unfortunate de Saint-James, "I think it would be best to abandon the attempt."

She drew away from him as if he were an adder. Contempt and anger burned in her eyes. "Abandon!" she cried hotly. "Abandon! If he thinks that he is quit of me so easily, he is mistaken. Do you hear? Mistaken! I shall get that Piécourt made a foot shorter if he is not careful. And as for you, you poor foolish creature, just you watch and see how a woman can deal with your miserable, imbecile sex."

Scornfully she gazed at the amazed and silenced de Saint-James and then, with head held high, she turned

and walked haughtily to the door which led from her boudoir into the apartments of Monsieur de Talleyrand. With a quick movement she turned the handle. But the door was locked. Monsieur de Talleyrand had thought of that little trick the moment de Saint-James left his presence.

For an instant, confused and surprised, she stood still, fighting back her tears. Then she called loudly for a footman. "Open that door," she commanded when the man appeared, and while he pushed and pulled and rattled the handle she stood watching him in angry silence, impatiently tapping her foot. Suddenly a triumphant smile lit up her face. She crossed to her desk, opened a drawer and drew out a small, recently painted and as yet unframed portrait of Talleyrand. Attaching it to a thin golden chain, she hung it about her neck. At this moment the footman forced the door open.

"You will soon hear from me," she said coldly to de Saint-James as she passed him on her way to the apartments of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The great *salon* was already crowded with guests when Catherine entered, for Talleyrand that night was giving a dinner to foreign ambassadors and diplomatists. The moment she appeared every eye in the room fixed itself on the portrait that dangled so conspicuously on her breast. Impishly delighted, she paid no attention to the inquisitive glances and accepted the banal compliments meted out to her with a meek and innocent air. Only when the greetings and formal expressions of respect were over did she turn to the company with an enchanting smile.

"I see that you have all noticed the picture," she exclaimed. "Is it not a most excellent likeness? And will you congratulate me, for it is a wedding present from that man!" With the most exquisitely audacious gesture she pointed her finger at Talleyrand.

In a dream the ex-Bishop of Autun listened to the congratulations that were addressed first to Catherine and then to him. For the first time in his life he was too utterly confounded to speak. He opened his mouth and then shut it again. He kept wiping the beads of perspiration that broke out on his forehead. Paris said she was a fool, he mused. Madame Grand a fool! She was as clever as the devil! She had led him into as neat an ambuscade as ever woman had devised for man. . . . This was a triumph for Catherine. He was caught in a net. There was no way out for him. How could he deny her announcement, here, before the greatest diplomatists and ambassadors of Europe? Why, he would become the laughing-stock of every court, every country—the mock of the world; Talleyrand, the cleverest statesman in Europe, outwitted by the cunning of a woman!

Calm and very pale, he watched her in wonderment. Mistress of the situation, she was all smiles and dimplings, bubbling over with happiness. And in his heart, strangely, the embers of his old passion glowed with sudden warmth. She was the sort of woman a man does not marry—and certainly not such a man as the ex-Bishop of Autun—but how tantalisingly lovely she was! He had never realised that “the power of habit” would influence him so strongly. . . .

Twenty-four hours later he yielded to Bonaparte and Catherine—influenced, some said, by “the remains of love and also perhaps by the fear of irritating a woman whom it is impossible to suppose he had not admitted to his confidence.”

IV

Paris clanged with rumours of the marriage. Was it possible, everyone asked, that Talleyrand should have so little respect for public opinion? Why, the man was still a priest, an ex-Bishop of Autun who had never been dispensed of his vows of celibacy! The woman—well, the woman was no better than she should be, a courtesan, a person of the town! The whole thing was impossible, a whim, a piece of bravado on Talleyrand's part.

To all this chatter and conjecture Talleyrand said not one word. Quietly, with the First Consul's help, he set about procuring from Rome that which he most desired, the legalisation of his admittance to lay society. At last, Pope Pius VII issued a special *Brève*, secularising his "beloved son Charles Maurice de Talleyrand."

"Opening our benevolent heart on your behalf," ran the Brief, "we grant you the right to wear secular habit and to manage all civil affairs." But, alas, with not so much as a word did the document grant the Minister of Foreign Affairs permission to marry! Bonaparte, however, fully determined once and for all to set the yoke of matrimony on Talleyrand's shoulders, interpreted the Brief in his own way. Cleverly he convinced the public that not only was the ex-Bishop of Autun secularised, but also that he had actually been granted the right of a layman to contract marriage. And while the Pope and the Nuncios in Rome were still dazed with astonishment and dismay at the First Consul's artifice, Madame Grand married her Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris.

Because of his equivocal position, Talleyrand arranged that the ceremony should take place with the minimum amount of publicity. On the 9th of September, 1802, before a few friends at Neuilly, the marriage contract

between Catherine Noël Werlée and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand was drawn up by two notaries. In the contract the goods belonging to the bride were enumerated—her clothes, linen, lace, jewels, furniture, diamonds to the value of 300,000 francs, securities and stocks in a bank in Hamburg, a house in the Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré, and an estate called Pont-de-Sains which had originally belonged to the Duc d'Orléans. Bonaparte, Josephine, Talleyrand's two brothers, Archambault and Boson de Périgord, the Secretary of State Maret and the two notaries, Lecerf and Fleury, signed the contract. The following day, the marriage was celebrated at the *Mairie* of the Tenth Arrondissement of Paris. Talleyrand and Catherine arrived with their witnesses—Rœderer, President of the section of the Interior of the Council of State, and Vice-Admiral Bruix for the bridegroom, and Radyx Sainte-Foy and General-in-Chief Beuronville, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic to the Court of Russia, for the bride. When Talleyrand and his wife had signed the register, the Prince of Nassau-Siegen, "grandee of Spain of the first class, Lieutenant-General in the service of His Catholic Majesty, and Admiral in the service of the Empress of Russia," added his name as a token of his friendship. To this civil marriage the curé of the little village of Épinay, situated in the district of which Pierrefitte was the chief town, secretly gave his blessing next day.

Such was the only religious ceremony in connection with the marriage of Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, ex-Bishop of Autun, and Catherine Noël, daughter of Pierre Werlée, one-time Capitaine du Port of Chandernagore in India.

V

Now Madame de Talleyrand once again turned her attention to Mr. Grand. During the anxious days before her marriage to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the guest at that hostel "for the accommodation alone of male strangers," the Hôtel du Cercle in the Rue de Richelieu, had proved a source of great anxiety to her. For a few short weeks, with the help of Sir Elijah Impey, she had managed to keep her ex-husband—from whom she was separated by a divorce which the Church of Rome did not recognise and which he could have disavowed—well out of the limelight. But the effort had cost her a considerable amount of money in the form of a liberal pension offered through the negotiations of the Chief of Justice and accepted by Grand. Unfortunately a person of Mr. Grand's calibre could not long be kept in the dark and when his presence in Paris became known, rumour and the pamphleteers got busy with ridicule and malicious gossip. This proved too much for Talleyrand when it got to his ears. He had promised to marry Madame Grand, but he was in no mood to be laughed at and mocked by society. He found George Grand's presence in Paris not only indiscreet but most offensive. Without delay, therefore, he set about the business of ridding the French capital of the ridiculous Anglo-Swiss. In his name he made Catherine write a letter to M. Van der Goes, Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Republic of Batavia, begging him to find a post for Grand in some distant Dutch colony. Van der Goes proved himself a kind and obliging friend to both Madame Grand and Monsieur de Talleyrand, for he replied immediately, offering Grand the post of Councillor to the Regency at the Cape of Good Hope at a salary of 2,000 florins per annum. Declaring

himself well satisfied with the post, Grand departed for Holland, and Monsieur de Talleyrand and Madame Grand, breathing sighs of relief, were married.

Their elation, however, was short lived for, very soon after their marriage, they discovered to their horror that the miserable Grand, thirsting for the joys of life, had merely deserted the pleasures of Paris for the delights of Amsterdam. Most galling of all, he seemed to have taken root there. In high dudgeon Talleyrand again made Catherine write to Van der Goes.

"Sir, I must no longer delay in thanking you for your kindness and for all you have done for M. Grand, at my request," she began her letter. "The eagerness and graciousness which you have shown proves to me that one does not count upon your friendship in vain, and encourages me to ask another favour of you : it is that you will enjoin M. Grand to embark without delay, for it is inconvenient that he should prolong his stay in Amsterdam, where he has now been for a month very much in the way. . . ." She signed this letter "Talleyrand-Périgord, *née* Werlée." She was very proud of her new name. Indeed, when writing another letter to M. Van der Goes just twelve days after her marriage, she had added the following postscript to her letter : "You will see, sir, by the name which my union with M. de Talleyrand gives me the right to bear, how the tender and sincere affection of that amiable friend has made me the happiest of women."

M. Van der Goes made Grand embark for the Cape immediately on receipt of Catherine's petition, and was rewarded with a gracious note from her, in which she assured him that "Monsieur de Talleyrand is as sensible as I am of your kind offices, and charges me to repeat to you all that I have already conveyed to you of his recognition, and his desire to give you proofs of his attachment and consideration."

But the anxieties of the Talleyrands with regard to Mr.

Grand were not yet at an end, for scarcely had Grand set sail from Amsterdam when the truce of Amiens was broken off. Alarmed at the thought that, if his ship were captured *en route*, the ghost of her past would once more appear in Paris to torment her, Catherine wrote again to Van der Goes, confiding her fears to him. Fortunately, he was able to set her mind at rest within a very short time by reporting that the newly appointed Councillor to the Regency at the Cape of Good Hope had safely reached his destination. So at last the past was comfortably buried and Catherine proudly resolved that with not even so much as a breath of indiscretion would she taint the noble name of Talleyrand-Périgord.

CHAPTER VI

I

BEFORE THE MIRROR OF WIFEHOOD CATHERINE PREENED herself like a bird-of-paradise. Looking at the world through rose-coloured spectacles she found it more exciting than ever. As Monsieur de Talleyrand's wife and the rightful queen of a *salon* crowded with the noblest and most brilliant men and women in Europe, she was at the height of her happiness and ambition.

On a certain evening of every week she held a reception at the Hôtel Gallifet to which every person of distinction in Paris was invited. On such nights the Rue du Bac was lined with carriages and the great courtyard resembled the foyer of the Opéra during the intervals of a gala performance. Singly or in pairs the guests passed through the open doorway and up the wide staircase decorated with flowers and lights, at the top of which, tall and beautiful and splendidly dressed, stood Madame de Talleyrand waiting to receive them, her husband, handsomely arrayed in a suit of red velvet, at her side. Every person who wished to keep within the charmed circle that surrounded the Minister of Foreign Affairs frequented these weekly receptions given by Madame de Talleyrand. Princes and princesses, ambassadors and ambassadresses, men of letters and messengers from foreign courts and governments all came. Even the envoy of Tunis, "a tall man in a turban, with very black moustaches, a grey robe trimmed with ermine over brodered red trousers," one night

passed "through the double line of stars, orders and bedizened coats," to bow before the one-time courtesan of Paris.

Not all the entertainments given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his wife were, however, as ceremonious as these receptions held at the Hôtel Gallifet. At the Villa Neuilly, where Catherine affected great state and scarcely moved a step without her attendant Orientals who burnt incense before her, the amusements were far less formal and more in the nature of "at homes" to which only a select number of guests, often no more than twenty, were invited. During the meal an orchestra played Mozart softly in a secluded niche. Afterwards the card tables were brought out or there was more music by talented guests, among them Madame de Laval, who often enchanted the company with her performance on the harp. Such an informal evening invariably came to an end with a few dances to a single violin. But there were other nights when the company at dinner was much larger, including not infrequently some of England's most renowned statesmen and hostesses. Charles James Fox, the incomparable Whig, often dined at Neuilly during his stay in Paris at the time of the Peace of Amiens. He brought his wife with him, for Catherine had been on friendly terms with her in England during the years of her Revolutionary exile when Mrs. Fox was still the celebrated Bet Armistead.

To Neuilly, too, came Sir Elijah and Lady Impey, Lady Bessborough and the Duchess of Cumberland. "I will not visit Madame Cabarrus," wrote Lady Bessborough in a letter to Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, referring to the lovely and notorious Theresia Tallien, "though I hope to see her to-morrow. Your native sense of justice makes you place Madame de Talleyrand in the same line, but power and marriage make so great a difference here that not visiting the latter would be reckoned a

ridicule. . . .” In yet another letter to England, after a dinner at Neuilly, she wrote: “We arrived in good time. I met Lord Whitworth who handed us in and I was announced Ambassadrice d’Angleterre, which for a long time I could not rectify. I never saw anything so magnificent as the apartments, all perfumed with frankincense (*cela sent l’Évêque*)—and as soon as seventy-eight people (of which the company consisted) sat down, an immense glass at the end of the room slid away by degrees, and soft and beautiful music began to play in the midst of the jingle of glass and *vaisselle*. The dinner was, I believe, excellent, but from some awkwardness in the arrangements it was very difficult to get anything to eat. Madame de Talleyrand is like the Duchess of Cumberland and perfectly justifies the reason he gave for marrying her: ‘*Qu’elle emporte le prix de la bêtise.*’ We waited a long while for dinner after we arrived and I continued meanwhile to get acquainted with Denon. . . . I desired him to sit by me at dinner, which he contrived to do, and amused me extremely. . . . I saw General Fox who was delighted to meet with anybody he knew. . . .”

Frequently fashionable writers were invited to Neuilly to entertain Monsieur and Madame de Talleyrand’s guests by reading aloud from their works. Nepomucène Lemer cier was the author on one such occasion, but so badly and in such a dull unvaried voice did he read his latest tragedy that very soon the entire company was reduced to a state of utter exhaustion. Catherine tried to suppress her yawns, but at last, wearied beyond endurance by boredom, she gave up the uneven struggle and dozed lightly in her chair. Oblivious of the effect that he had created, Lemer cier continued to read to the end of the first act and then, pitching his voice several keys higher, began the second.

“*La scène est à Lyons,*” he announced shrilly.

Awakened from her half-sleep by the sudden change in his voice, Catherine sat bolt upright in her chair. “There

now, my dear," she exclaimed, turning to her husband. "You see, I was right. You *would* call it the Sàone!"

The dramatist stopped dead in his recital, his mouth agape. Every eye looked with amused inquiry from Talleyrand to Catherine and for an instant the Minister of Foreign Affairs, too, gazed at his wife in puzzled perplexity. Then recollection dawned on him. "Ah, yes, of course, my dear, I remember," he said quietly. Then, with a twinkle in his little sinister eyes, he turned to the company and gravely explained the strange interruption. "When our carriage was passing over the bridge at Lyons, a little while ago," he related, "Madame de Talleyrand asked me the name of the river that flowed beneath it. I told her it was the Sàone. 'The Sàone!' she cried. 'What a strange change of pronunciation! They call it the Seine in Paris!'"

In the general laughter which resulted from his narration of her Lyons sally, Catherine joined gaily. Good-natured and even-tempered, she was ready to participate even in merriment caused by a joke against herself. Her ear had not, as yet, become attuned to the malice in the laughter of Talleyrand's friends. Childishly delighted with her new state, it took her some time to realise that, in the eyes of the fine gentlemen in embroidered suits covered with orders, and the satin, velvet and lace-gowned ladies, glittering with diamonds, she was but a common upstart, a vulgar, pretentious, silly creature of no consequence who had to be tolerated and treated with superficial courtesy because that was necessary if one wished to enjoy the fascinating company of her illustrious husband.

"Talleyrand wanted four things out of life. He wanted to be a bishop, a minister, a millionaire and to marry a

fool. He succeeded in all four." Such was General Macdonald's verdict on Talleyrand after that gentleman had been a husband for twelve years. Unfortunately the good Macdonald was not in a position to know that, to a great extent, Talleyrand's success in acquiring enormous wealth was due to the business acumen and charm of the fool whom the world said he had married.

Catherine's stupidity, even in the early years of her married life, had become proverbial. Though there were many who praised and admired her as one of the kindest and most gracious ladies of her time, a great many more, and these mainly women who loved Talleyrand, detested her and saw in her only a vulgar parvenue of intolerable ignorance. "Her want of sense is such that it is impossible to disguise it," said some, while others declared that "silliness and vanity are stamped upon her face."

Above such clamours in society and at Court, the voice of friendly defence strove valiantly to make itself heard by praising her beauty and repeatedly asserting that she never said "anything approaching the absurd remarks which people have taken pleasure in imputing to her." But it was a small voice and easily deadened by the din of condemnation.

Fearing that he might be made to wear his wife's alleged stupidity "like a fool's cap," Talleyrand said nothing to refute it. He wrapped himself in a cloak of dignified silence and played the martyred husband to an audience of his lady friends. Occasionally he threw aside his cloak of silence and with some contemptuously cynical remark, made in very bad taste, blunted the shafts of ridicule which he suspected might quite possibly strike him through his wife. For Talleyrand was an enigma of a man—vain and witty, brutal and gallant, good-natured and unscrupulous, and as unaffected by another's pain as he was incapable of gratitude. So it was deliberately, knowing full well that it would be bandied about Paris, that he

relieved himself of the following aphorism in a gathering of distinguished diplomatists: "A clever woman often compromises her husband, a silly one only compromises herself." On another occasion, in comparing Catherine with Madame de Staël, he said suavely: "One must have loved a genius to be able to appreciate the happiness of a fool." And to a friend he confided: "I married her because she was the greatest fool I could find." Yet in spite of these assertions he treated Catherine with courtesy and kindness, and invited no one to his table or his house who did not, on the surface, show her due respect and deference. Cynically he chuckled up his sleeve at a society which in private laughed hilariously at the alleged vulgarities and stupidities of a woman to whom, in public, and for the pleasure of his company, it paid cold but civil homage.

Mirabeau had once called Talleyrand a "vile base trickster." This he was—and more than this. Treacherous, hypocritical and fundamentally indifferent to principles and the feelings of others, he had an insatiable genius for ensnaring and making slaves of those who could be of use to him. He achieved his ends by eloquence and intellect, by humour and almost unnatural flattery. So in his web, knowing that he could make use of her, he entangled Catherine. For Talleyrand, in his heart of hearts, realised quite plainly that his wife was not the simple fool the world thought her to be. Could a fool have induced him to marry her? Could a fool have staged that cunning little play with the portrait on that night of the great reception to the diplomatists? Most certainly not! But it suited his purpose that she should be thought a fool—even by Bonaparte, who raised his voice in the general clamour, declaring that in truth she was beautiful, "but stupid and perfectly ignorant." Words, words—and what did the clamour of words matter to Talleyrand since, despite her *naïveté*, facts spoke more eloquently to

him in indisputable proof of her sound common sense and amazing business acumen.

Talleyrand venerated wealth and was not particularly squeamish as to the manner in which he acquired it. So, when he found that Catherine's charm and discretion and business ability could be employed to good advantage in bringing certain unscrupulous transactions to fruition, he used her unblushingly. He planned and schemed and played the piper, and Catherine, with a Frenchwoman's shrewd instinct for making money, danced to his tune like an intelligently and perfectly manipulated puppet. So it was that she helped "in a skilful organisation of contraband trading in the realms of the Czar," worked in conjunction with a Russian woman, that brought a goodly sum to the Talleyrand coffers. On another occasion, by mediating on their behalf for certain favours from her august husband, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, she obtained 400,000 francs from some Genoese merchants; and when Count Bentheim Steinfurt desired to free his county from the vassalage to Hanover, which was occupied by France, he paid her 100,000 livres for helping him to gain Talleyrand's promise to intercede with Bonaparte on his account.

Fully aware that his wife's passion for luxury and splendour was as great as his own, Talleyrand ably and unscrupulously worked behind the scenes, pulling a thousand little strings. And Catherine, dancing spiritedly but discreetly to his tune, helped him by her charms and prudent judgment to amass a great fortune which included a sum of 4,000,000 francs paid to him by the town of Hamburg in the hope that he would save the city from being handed over to the French State. Hamburg, unfortunately, met the fate it feared. But with the 4,000,000 francs Talleyrand bought and furnished one of the noblest palaces in Paris, the magnificent Hôtel Monaco in the Rue de Varenne.

III

At St. Cloud, on the 18th of May, 1804, Bonaparte received the title of "Your Majesty" for the first time from the lips of Cambacérès, Second Consul and President of the Senate. He accepted it calmly, just as if he had been accustomed to it all his life. That day it was arranged that the formal coronation ceremony should take place before the year was out. Most strenuously, however, Bonaparte vetoed the suggestion that the Pope should place the diadem of sovereignty upon his head. He had found the crown of France lying on the ground and had taken it up on the point of his sword, he informed the Senate, and no hand but his own would place it on his head. As he decreed, so it happened. On the 2nd day of December, in the great cathedral of Notre-Dame, he crowned himself Emperor of France with his own hands. Pope Pius, who had accepted the invitation to be present at the coronation ceremony only because of "the advantages and concessions to be gained by this gracious act," solemnly gave that which alone was required of him—his benediction. From that day the name of Bonaparte disappeared and that of Napoleon took its place—Napoleon I of France. In the newly created Empire there were no longer citizens, citizenesses and *ci-devants* but only messieurs, mesdames and aristocrats. And while that "red partridge," Fouché, was nominated Minister of Police, Monsieur de Talleyrand was elevated to the high dignity of Grand Chamberlain.

Though he neither could nor would recognise the legality of Talleyrand's marriage, Pope Pius, during his stay in Paris, was on moderately friendly terms with the newly appointed Grand Chamberlain. But he firmly refused to have Catherine presented to him. In his eyes there was no Madame de Talleyrand, but only a person, a one-time

courtesan of whom he greatly disapproved. If ever an occasion arose when he had, perforce, to allude to her, he studiously and assiduously referred to her as "*questa donna*" or "*cette dame*"—that woman! This appellation delighted the scandalmongers of Paris and caused a new harvest of sarcasms about the wife of the Grand Chamberlain to ripen at Court and in fashionable society. Napoleon was not slow to notice the effect created by the Pope's contemptuous designation and complete disregard of a union which he had practically forced upon Talleyrand. Indeed, the Emperor had long since regretted the part he had played in ensnaring Talleyrand into matrimony, for Catherine had lost his favour on the very first occasion that she appeared at the Tuileries as a bride.

"I hope that the good conduct of Citoyenne Talleyrand will cause the indiscretions of Madame Grand to be forgotten," he had welcomed her with characteristic ill-manner to her first Court.

"In that respect," she had answered him simply, her blue eyes innocently meeting his, "I cannot do better than follow the example of Citoyenne Bonaparte."

The impudence of the woman! That she dared rap him so sharply across the knuckles while gazing at him with so ingenuous an air! For that innocently administered reproof he had never forgiven her and from that time he treated her with cold indifference, often even "rudely." Now, with the Pope's disapproval to back him up, he determined once and for all to rid himself completely of all association with Talleyrand's marriage by refusing to receive Catherine at Court. But this was too much even for Talleyrand. Feeling that his "family pride was hurt," he flew to his wife's defence and insisted on her reception. When the Emperor remained adamant in his refusal, he tendered his resignation as a servant of the Crown. At this climax hasty negotiations were entered upon and finally Napoleon agreed to allow Madame de Talleyrand to appear

at Court on the definite understanding that these appearances should be made "as seldom as possible." To this contract Talleyrand strictly adhered and so, too, did the Emperor, for even after she had become a princess he "never admitted her to the distinctions of the rank to which she was raised without making a difficulty about it."

Talleyrand was created a Prince of the Empire with the title of Prince de Bénévènt two years after the coronation. "Eh, *mon Dieu*, you are mistaken. It isn't here, it is to Madame de Talleyrand you must present your compliments. Women are always delighted to be princesses," he told the courtiers who came to congratulate him on the new honour that had been conferred on him by the Emperor.

Soon after she became Princesse de Bénévènt, Catherine had her portrait painted by Gérard. Standing with indolent grace before a fireplace, the leaping flames casting a crimson reflection on her sweeping white muslin empire gown, her tall figure lissom and graceful as a girl's, her golden hair crowning the loveliness of her sweet and gentle features, her head held proudly high, she made a perfect subject for the artist's brush.

At this time Catherine was forty-three. She carried her years lightly and was as beautiful as ever, though there were those in Paris who averred that her small *retroussé* nose gave her, curiously enough, a definite resemblance to Talleyrand.

CHAPTER VII

THOUGH CATHERINE'S BEHAVIOUR BEFORE HER marriage with Monsieur de Talleyrand was unquestionably open to censure, her conduct after that event was beyond reproach. The courtesan who had been the sport and plaything of many men became the devoted wife, zealously faithful to her husband and his interests and prouder perhaps even than Talleyrand of the name she now bore. In 1803 when the two historic families of Talleyrand-Périgord and de Noailles became united by the marriage of Talleyrand's niece Mélanie-Xavier de Périgord to Just de Noailles, Catherine was the only dissatisfied person. "*Cette alliance n'est point honorable pour nous,*" she declared. "*Car qu'est ce que c'est la famille de Noailles auprès de la mansion de Périgord.*"

As swift as this astonishing metamorphosis in pride was the manner in which her personality changed. This was due in equal measure to the security of her position as wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the attitude adopted towards her by the Court and the majority of Talleyrand's friends, particularly the women. Once fully conscious of their antagonism, she made no effort to hide the fact that she disliked them as cordially as they detested her, and frequently she showed her hatred in a manner neither dignified nor consistent with the elevated mien to which she aspired. Fully convinced that her position gave her the right to treat all who displeased her with

arrogant pride, she became haughty, headstrong and full of self-importance. She had always loved luxury, splendour and ostentation, but now, since beneath her rank and social veneer she still remained the middle-class daughter of Pierre Werlée, she grew pretentious and gave herself airs. The powerful guarantee of social security and consequence acted like an intoxicating wine on her senses. Her hauteur and pretentiousness became as proverbial as her beauty and stupidity. Her *naïvetés*, which had given "so strong a tinge of originality to all which she said or did," developed into eccentricities. As a Princess of the Empire she affected an almost royal state, surrounding herself with a little court of pages and maids-of-honour, chamberlains and mistresses of the robes. Though often herself scorning ceremonial etiquette with impunity, she put a great store upon it in others. She was vain of her husband's armorial bearings, which she displayed with inordinate pride, and developed an overwhelming interest in genealogy, digging with an almost ghoulish delight into the pedigree of those who had incurred her displeasure.

Yet there were times when the haughty princess could be as sweet and gracious as in the old days before marriage with Monsieur de Talleyrand had made a great lady of her. For she was as tender and kind to the people who showed her affection and friendship as she was arrogant to those whom she disliked.

Catherine was happy. Her *cher prince*, whom she loved with unwavering fidelity, was still the most sought-after man in the Empire of France. Her *salon* was always crowded, and in the glitter of her title, her position and her wealth, she found compensation for the disapproval of the Court and the bitter censure of the Emperor.

II

Talleyrand was constantly on his guard against the mockery arising out of the scorn and arrogance with which Catherine met Napoleon's spite and society's criticism. Though, when driven into a corner, he was quick to seize the opportunity of "throwing back the ridicule which he felt was like to attack him, upon herself," for the present at any rate he stood by the mistake he had made and the woman he had married. "A haughty demeanour to those who ventured to laugh at him or her, extreme politeness, great social influence and political weight, a large fortune, unalterable patience under insult and much dexterity in taking his revenge, were the weapons with which he met the general condemnation." At times, with his keen sense of the comic, he could not help feeling amused at Catherine's pretensions. But more often they irritated him. The grand-seigneur, in spite of his sense of the ludicrous, felt revolted often enough by the silly airs of the parvenue. Yet, as always, he concealed his true feelings and hid his annoyance behind a mask of dignified inscrutability. He was no longer in love with Catherine. He was patently unfaithful to her, amusing himself with endless amours. But he treated her with courtesy and saw to it that her position in his house was recognised with due respect. For in truth, he still found her useful to him. He had the greatest respect for her shrewd understanding of the art of holding a *salon*, and her charm as a hostess was invaluable to him. Furthermore, her innate indolence exerted a powerful effect on his good nature. He was sure of her, sure that she would not with hysterical tantrums and violent scenes disturb his delight in an easy-going existence. For the time being, therefore, she suited him well enough.

But he was not really happy. Though he hid his feelings behind a disguise of indifference and habitual calm, never speaking of his married life and but rarely of his wife, his friends were quick to notice his unhappiness. In his eyes, Madame de Rémusat, lady-in-waiting to the Empress Josephine and his understanding and purely platonic friend, read the bitter thoughts from which he was so eager to escape. "Public affairs helped him by giving him occupation," she declared, "and such time as they left on his hands he spent at the gaming-tables. Always surrounded by a numerous court, he gave his mornings to business, his evenings to the theatre and his nights to cards, never exposing himself to a tedious *tête-à-tête* with his wife, or to the dangers of solitude which would have afforded an opportunity for too serious reflection. Ever seeking distraction he never sought sleep until he had ensnared it by extreme fatigue."

Thus ran Madame de Rémusat's testimony of the ennui which Catherine caused her husband. Unfortunately it is not an impartial revelation, for Madame de Rémusat and her husband, though they loved Talleyrand, took not the slightest trouble to make friends with his wife. Treating her with polite civility, they never, even in her own *salon*, made more than a few conventional remarks to her on their arrival or departure. Nevertheless, if Talleyrand was not quite so bored with Catherine as Madame de Rémusat would have us believe, she certainly no longer amused him. Eagerly, then, he turned to a new diversion in his house in the person of Charlotte, the little daughter of an *émigré* who, dying in exile in England and anxious that she should be brought up in his fatherland, confided her to the charge of France's Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose intimate friend he had been. Talleyrand was delighted with little Charlotte. He adopted her and bestowed his name on her and she came to live in his house. Catherine, who as a rule was jealous of the

affection he showed to other people, opened her heart to the child, and mothered her as if she were her own daughter.

The happiness which the advent of the strange little girl brought to the Talleyrand home set the sharp tongues of the scandalmongers wagging mischievously. Some declared that the child was one of Talleyrand's numerous illegitimate offspring. Others declared with malicious conviction that she was the long-lost daughter of the one-time Madame Grand! But such rumours had no repercussions in the house of the Minister of Foreign Affairs where, her heart overflowing with tenderness, as it always did towards those who loved her in return, Catherine spoilt and petted the little girl and Talleyrand made her the apple of his eye. When, reclining on his very special ottoman, he granted his privileged audiences in the evenings after dinner, he always held Charlotte on his knees or close by his side. It was for her that he arranged children's balls and musical evenings at the mansion in the Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré which he had given to Catherine as a marriage gift. These evenings, for which Talma, Crescenti, Madame Grassini and all the first artists of the day were engaged to give performances, became the talk of Paris. But when a sudden attack of rheumatism made it necessary for him to "take the waters," Catherine and Charlotte and a small court, which included his confidential agent Blanc d'Hauterive, and that vivacious old lady, Madame de Bonneuil, accompanied him to his favourite spa, Bourbon-l'Archambault.

At this time Charlotte was learning to read. What tears flowed at those reading lessons, for when Talleyrand dared to frown at the child, or to scold her for stumbling over a word, Catherine, who still cried charmingly and with the most amazing ease, wept copiously, her tears falling even faster than those of the little girl. But her weeping had long lost its effect on Talleyrand. He who once thought that no woman had ever looked so lovely

as Catherine when she cried, now watched her unmoved, his calm sang-froid seeming to say more eloquently than words: "Weep, weep, my dear, for it is necessary to women for their health that they should sometimes shed tears."

III

For the services which he rendered the Emperor in striking a great bargain with the Czar of Russia by the Treaty of Tilsit, Talleyrand was made Vice-Grand Elector and Chief Chancellor. He now gave up the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and went to reside in splendour at his palace in the Rue de Varenne, Faubourg Saint-Germain, called the Hôtel Monaco, which he had acquired through Catherine's help and the city of Hamburg's bribe of 4,000,000 francs. Foreigners called the Hôtel Monaco "the little court." Here all the state and ceremony, elegance, manners and practices of a royal palace were observed. Talleyrand surrounded himself with an enormous suite. Courtiers flattered him, hangers-on fawned on him, and servants, stewards and chamberlains danced attendance on his needs and on the needs of his princess, who herself was followed by a train of attendants, pages, maids-of-honour and mistresses of the robes.

To the Hôtel Monaco, to pay their respects to the illustrious Vice-Grand Elector, came every person of rank and consequence, ambassadors and ambassadresses, foreign princes and princesses, indeed, all the most distinguished people of Europe then in Paris. The reception rooms were always crowded and there was ever a small coterie of women present, of whom Talleyrand "had in general been rather the lover than the friend." Among the many women who frequented the "little court" were the Duchesse de Luynes, the Princesse de Vaudemout and Talleyrand's much attached and faithful Vicomtesse de

Laval ; clever Aimée de Coigny, the first Duchesse de Fleury, who had married Montrond ; good Madame de Rémusat, trying " by the sweat of her brow to say something clever " ; Mesdames de Bellegarde " whose only claim to importance in society was their extreme licence of speech " ; Madame de Souza, wife of the ambassador to Portugal, who had been the Vice-Grand Elector's *amorosa* in the days when she was Madame de Flahaut ; and the Countess Tyskiewitz, a Polish lady with a glass eye who, meeting Talleyrand in Warsaw before Tilsit, fell passionately in love with him and followed him to Paris. Though her husband's lady friends treated her coldly, only greeting her when they arrived or left her *salon* and but seldom addressing more than a dozen banal remarks to her, Catherine scorned them and was happy in her arrogance. For was she not, too, like some of them, a real princess and, despite their jealousy, the queen of Talleyrand's little court ? However much they might consider her an intruder, as the wife of the Vice-Grand Elector they had to pay her civil respect whether they liked it or not ! That was all she expected of them.

At this time Catherine was still very beautiful. She loved clothes and jewels, always dressed magnificently, spending many hours of each day in the company of her milliner, her hairdresser, her jeweller and her dress-maker. She did not read much, did very little fancy-work, paid few visits and seldom went to Court. Yet life was never dull for her. The luxuries of being a princess, the company of Charlotte and a few sincere friends, the theatre, shopping, driving in the Bois, the splendid receptions at which she played hostess, completely satisfied her needs. She was the head of the charmed circle which gathered around her distinguished husband. Very beautiful she looked those evenings of the great assemblies, magnificently gowned and with flowers or pearls and precious stones in her still golden hair. Regally and rather

stiffly she sat in her chair. She did not speak much. It was difficult for her to shine conversationally in the presence of so unrivalled a talker as her husband. "If Monsieur de Talleyrand's conversation could be bought, I should ruin myself on it!" Madame de Staël had once said in the days when Talleyrand was still her friend. Though many years had passed since then, his tongue had lost none of its wit. Small wonder then that, never a sparkling conversationalist at the best of times, Catherine was often reduced to silence by the firework-display of Talleyrand and his guests. When she did speak, Talleyrand seldom listened to what she said. Sometimes, with unaffected artlessness she made quite amusing remarks, but too often—as on the occasion when the Princess Dolgorouki, covered in magnificent jewels, arrived at a reception at the Hôtel Monaco—he found her ingenuous candour vexing and embarrassing.

"Oh, madame, what beautiful diamonds!" Catherine had exclaimed that night in rapture, at the sight of her guest's display of jewels. "How happy you must be to possess them!"

"If you expressed a wish to have some like them," replied the Princess Dolgorouki, "I am sure the Prince de Talleyrand would be delighted to make you a present of them."

"But, *mon Dieu*, madame, you forget!" cried Catherine. "Do you imagine I have married the Pope?"



PRINCESSE DE TALLEYRAND

By Gérard,

CHAPTER VIII

REGULARLY EACH YEAR WHEN THE WEATHER IN Paris became unpleasantly warm, the Talleyrands forsook their town house for the Château of Valençay, an estate in Berry which Talleyrand had bought the year after his marriage, and which, since he delighted in playing the rôle of a country squire, held infinite charms for him.

Catherine loved Valençay. She loved it with an almost religious fervour. Here she was not merely a great lady, but a veritable queen. The grandly austere château, part convent part fortress, with its rambling cloisters, sunny *salons*, high towers and deep moat, was her royal palace; the great wide-flung vista of valley, parklands and forest were the limits of her kingdom. Always, at the first sign of spring in Paris, her thoughts turned like homing birds to Valençay. Spring with its bursting buds and young dewy-wet leaves elated her senses. To her ears the cooing of the wood-pigeons in the elms of her château in Berry sounded as sweet as the song of nightingales. She loved to wander down the long lilac-scented alleys of the park or to drive through the forest clearings, where a fleeting glimpse of a roebuck or a deer sent her into ecstasies of delight. But perhaps her greatest affection for Valençay was inspired by the fact that here, occasionally, she could be alone with her *cher prince* for as long as half an hour at a time—a joy which

seldom came to her in Paris. Though often, in later years, he rarely addressed a remark to her as she sat beside him indolently plying her embroidery needle—he would bury himself securely behind a copy of the *Moniteur*—yet these rare moments, alone with him and undisturbed, were the happiest of her life. How proud she felt and with what a possessive air she looked at Talleyrand when a guest appeared suddenly on the terrace and found them there, sitting together like Darby and Joan !

All through the long summers the château was filled with visitors, illustrious, social, political and literary personages. Many and varied were the pleasures arranged for their entertainment. Sometimes too, "in all the majesty of stiffened silks and fluttering plumes," Catherine played hostess at a dinner to the maire and the curé and all the authorities of the district. In the eyes of these provincials she was a very great lady indeed, gracious and charming and much respected for her many kindnesses to the poor and her generosity in establishing a school for a dozen girls at Valençay. But perhaps of all her neighbours the noble family of de Rostaing loved her best. Monsieur de Rostaing had been prominent in the Royalist rising in La Vendée in 1795, but now, old and forgotten, he lived with his family in retirement and in very poor circumstances in a small cottage near the Talleyrand château. From the very first Catherine's warm heart had been deeply touched by the ill-fortune which had befallen this family of high birth. Generously she came to their aid, doing everything in her power to make the lives of Monsieur and Madame de Rostaing easier and pleasanter. Their two daughters, girls of marked character and gentility, she took under her special care. She had them educated at her expense, and, when they were old enough, introduced them into society.

A sweet calm lay on Valençay. There was nothing to caution Catherine against the approach of a rising gale.

Happily she spent enchanting summers in her beloved château. No dreams came to warn her that one day she would for ever be parted from it, nor that, strange as it might seem, her fate was bound up with that of the Emperor, whose covetous eyes were fixed on the Kingdom of Spain.

II

The Spanish drama, which was to start a new chapter in the Napoleonic era, began at Fontainebleau in October 1807, with a secret convention between France and Spain, of which the ostensible issue was the partition of Portugal. Actually, however, Napoleon was scheming for the military occupation of Spain by peaceful means, with the object of placing his brother Joseph on the throne. Talleyrand was bitterly opposed to the series of diabolical plots by which the Emperor planned to get Spain into his power and make it a dependency of France. "This is a base intrigue. It is a blunder which will never be repaired," he declared in a heated argument with his Emperor.

But in spite of his resistance French troops entered Spain in accordance with the terms of the secret Fontainebleau Convention and marched towards Lisbon. They met no opposition, but at their approach the Royal Family of Portugal fled to Brazil in the Portuguese fleet. Gradually and peacefully, Napoleon's troops occupied the most strategic positions in Spain. This caused the futile Charles IV of Spain to think furiously. Like a thunder-clap it was suddenly borne upon him that his country had been betrayed to France by his minister Godoy. Revolts had broken out throughout the length and breadth of Spain. The Spanish people, roused to fury by Godoy's treachery, demanded not only the head of Godoy, Prince of the Peace, but also the abdication of their King in favour of his son, Ferdinand, Prince of Asturias. These

domestic quarrels in Spain suited Napoleon's schemes admirably. Leaving Paris after a cold parting from Talleyrand, who more bitterly than ever opposed the Spanish plot, he arrived at Bayonne. There he laid a well-baited trap into which, by a series of the most unblushing intrigues, he lured first Charles IV and then his son, the Prince of Asturias. By trickery he compelled them both to surrender all claim to the Spanish throne. This work done, he allowed the timid Charles and his Queen, Maria Luisa, to depart to the Château de Compiègne and afterwards to Italy, packed Ferdinand of Asturias off to France, and prevailed upon a small number of Spanish Grandees to elect Joseph Bonaparte to the vacant throne.

It was his Vice-Grand Elector, who had so strongly objected to the Spanish conspiracy, whom the Emperor now chose as gaoler of the Spanish Infantes, Ferdinand of Asturias, his young brother Carlos and their uncle Don Antonio; and it was Talleyrand's own Château of Valençay that he selected as a prison for his unwilling guests. "See that the rooms are ready; prepare the bed and table-linen and kitchen utensils," he wrote with imperial command to his Vice-Grand Elector. "I wish these Princes to be received without exterior pomp, but decently and with attention, and that you should do your best to amuse them. If you have a theatre at Valençay, there would be no harm in getting some comedians to come down. You might have Madame de Talleyrand there and four or five women. If the Prince of Asturias should fall in love with some pretty woman, and the fact were known, there would be no objection to it as it would be one more way of keeping a watch on him. It is of the greatest importance that the Prince of Asturias should not commit any blunder. . . . I have determined to send him to a country seat and to surround him with pleasure and with supervision. . . . For yourself, your mission is sufficiently honourable. To receive three illustrious persons

and amuse them is quite in the character of the nation and of your rank. . . .”

Talleyrand was infuriated by this message. Only too well did he read between the lines. It was to repay him for his antagonism to the Spanish plot that the Emperor now laboured to humble and discredit him in the eyes of Europe. By appointing him custodian of the dethroned prince, Napoleon was obviously planning to keep him well out of affairs in Paris. Furthermore, and with insult added to injury, there could be no mistake about the insolently cynical innuendoes directed at his wife and the part she should play at Valençay. Though he boiled inwardly with rage and indignation, he could do nothing. His hands were tied. There was no way out of this embarrassing situation. “I will respond with my best endeavours to the confidence with which your Majesty honours me,” he replied with dignified irony to Napoleon’s communication. “Madame de Talleyrand left last night to give the preliminary orders. The Château is amply furnished with cooks, china and linen of all kinds. The Princes shall have every pleasure which the bad season permits. I will give them Mass every day, a park to walk in, a well-cleared forest, though with little game in it, horses, numerous meals and music. There is no theatre, and it would be more than difficult to find actors. However, there will be enough women for the Princes to dance with if it amuses them. . . .”

A few days later the Princes of Spain—Ferdinand of Asturias, an intellectually undeveloped young widower of twenty-four, his young brother Carlos and their uncle Don Antonio—arrived at Valençay in a clumsy, old-fashioned state-coach. They were followed almost immediately by their suite of twenty people, which included their ecclesiastical mentor and guide, Canon Escoïquitz, and the dashing Duc de San Carlos, a merry courteous gentleman of fashion with a great reputation for subtlety, finesse and daring in amorous intrigues.

III

Proud to have such distinguished guests as the scions of Spanish Royalty under her roof, Catherine received the Infantes at Valençay with charming hospitality. Talleyrand, too, did what he could for his unwelcome visitors and, since he had been granted 75,000 francs a year by the State for their maintenance, spared no expense in giving them all the splendour and luxury which he thought necessary to make their captivity as pleasant as possible.

The Château of Valençay took on the appearance of a Castilian palace ; the servants were dressed in livery in the Spanish colours ; and the yellow and red flag of Spain streamed in the breeze from the central tower. With luxury, entertainment and discretion, Talleyrand and his princess tried to pacify the angry and unhappy Infantes who had been so basely cheated of their country. The famous Castro was specially engaged to enchant them into contentment by playing his guitar in the shrubberies ; one of the Prince de Condé's old guard, a man named Aubry, taught them to shoot so that they might enjoy the pleasures of deer-hunting in the forest of Gâtine ; grooms taught them to ride on horseback for the first time ; they went fishing ; they danced the bolero and fandango on the terrace, and made music with Catherine and her women guests in the drawing-rooms. So large a number of elegant and high-born ladies, including the Duchesse de Gênes, the two Mesdames Bellegarde and the very beautiful Genoese Madame de Brignoli, had been invited to Valençay, that the Château quite gave the illusion of a court. Nothing was wanting to make the princes happy in their gilded cage. Spain had to become for them a "forgotten country." In addition they were to be kept uninformed of the grave events in the Peninsula.

Diplomatically the Prince de Bénévent and his princess covered the chains of captivity with the flowers of pleasure. Talleyrand even attempted to educate the two young princes, but the education "which began in the library gradually sank to the level of a picture-book." The twenty-four-year-old widower, Ferdinand of Asturias, was an extraordinarily simple creature, his young brother Carlos a mere child. They preferred the clamours of a fair to the peace of a library, and enjoyed buying children's toys at a booth and playing childish games far more than studying great tomes with their host. Fireworks, too, sent them into wild delight, and when a poor person begged alms of them they gave him a doll instead.

Talleyrand found the custodianship of the young princes and their suite a wearisome and embarrassing business. He heaved a great sigh of relief when in the middle of August and at the request of Napoleon—who had need of him at the Erfurt Conference—he was at last able to set out for Nantes and later for Paris. He left his wife and her ladies at Valençay, however, "so that the Château should not suddenly appear monastic."

For the gradual change which took place in the hearts of the Infantes, Catherine's attentiveness as a hostess was almost as much responsible as Talleyrand's adroitness in managing their feelings. In a very short time they grew deeply enamoured of Valençay, and with youthful fickleness often declared that they preferred it infinitely to the solemn splendour and awe-inspiring pomp of the Spanish Court. Ferdinand in particular was highly contented, for he had found an amiable diversion in a love affair with one of Catherine's young ladies. And no sooner did Talleyrand leave for Nantes, than that dazzling Don Juan, the Duc de San Carlos, began to enliven his exile by laying siege to his hostess's heart.

The company of the Spanish duke and the homage which he paid her delighted Catherine. It pleased her

to think that, though she was nearing fifty, so young and dashing a man of the world still found her desirable and beautiful. The years had not dulled the keen edge of her appetite for flattery and compliments. But the old days of impudent imprudence were over. She was no longer Madame Grand, but Madame de Talleyrand, Princess de Bénévent, a great lady who felt in no mood for flagrant indiscretions that might taint the noble names which she bore with so much pride. Tactfully she repulsed San Carlos's more ardent pleadings and won his friendship instead, a friendship which committed her to nothing more than a pretty flirtation and the joy of listening, happy as a *débutante*, to the enchanting nonsense that he poured into her ears. But the scandalmongers of Paris found such a relationship between the lady-killing Duc de San Carlos and his hostess quite incomprehensible. Malicious tongues began to hint slyly that the Princess de Talleyrand was playing her part at Valençay "in a manner much more calculated to please the Emperor than her husband." When, with the last of the fine weather, she left Valençay—a beloved Valençay which she was destined never again to see—and returned to Paris, these rumours of a *liaison* were confirmed without further qualms, for frequently, during the months that followed, Canon Escoïquitz "in a cassock with huge trousers and the *grand cordon* of Charles III over his shoulder," came to the Hôtel Monaco or the mansion in the Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré to pay her his respects, and still more often the Duc de San Carlos was present in her *salon*, charming the ladies with his courtly attentions. Gossip, battenning on these visits, waxed garrulous. Soon everyone was saying that the Duc de San Carlos was Catherine de Talleyrand's lover.

IV

Napoleon returned to Paris after his victory at Wagram fully decided upon his divorce from Josephine. The proceedings put him in a bad mood and indiscriminately he vented his ill-humour on the Ministers of his Council and the members of his Court. Talleyrand alone, during these anxious days, appeared to him as a veritable tower of strength. "There is no one but Talleyrand with whom I can talk," he declared repeatedly. So once again he turned in friendship to the man whom he had banished from his intimacy at the beginning of the Spanish drama. For Talleyrand strongly supported the Emperor in his desire for a divorce, urging instead a powerful matrimonial alliance with an Archduchess. The Prince de Bénévent had never forgiven Josephine for the part that she had once played in forcing him to give his name to Catherine Grand. . . .

In December 1809 the Emperor's marriage was annulled. Four months later he married his Austrian Archduchess. In Paris great festivities were held in honour of the wedding. The city overflowed with distinguished visitors and as usual Talleyrand's *salon* was crowded. Like moths about a candle, the old charmed circle of feminine admirers fluttered about him. The Vicomtesse de Laval was still as faithful as ever; so was Madame de Souza; the Comtesse Tyskiewitz, whose glass eye "made her profile look so strange," brought her niece, the Countess Potočka; Madame de Rémusat came too, and so did the Comtesse de Boigne. But the Duchess of Courland, whose lovely and talented daughter Dorothéa had recently married Talleyrand's dull and uninteresting nephew, Edmond de Périgord, was the most constant satellite among the great ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. At the age of

forty-five she was still very beautiful. Often, long after midnight, she would come to Talleyrand's *salon* to show him a new jewel or a ball-dress that she was wearing, "just as a girl of twenty might have done." He was passionately in love with her.

Yet still Catherine occupied the place of honour in the magic circle about her husband. Haughtier than ever, she treated the ladies of his "elderly seraglio" with frigid civility, often with studied rudeness. For though she set so great a store by etiquette, she sometimes considered even ordinary politeness beneath her dignity in her dealings with those whom she disliked. Small wonder then that her pretensions made her insupportable to the coterie of Monsieur de Talleyrand's feminine admirers, and that these ladies seldom called at the Hôtel Monaco unless they felt quite sure of finding him there to protect them from her airs and graces. Pride and arrogance often, in these days, made her overstep the bounds of good manners, as, for instance, on the memorable occasion when she went out for a walk at an hour fixed for a reception at her house. When the guests arrived they were naïvely informed by the solitary lady-in-waiting who received them in the drawing-room that "Her Highness, seduced by a ray of sunshine, had gone out for a turn in the Bois." Patiently, in simmering anger, they awaited the return of their hostess. At last she arrived. Smiling and gracious, she entered the room with a rustle of silk. But she offered neither apology nor excuse for having kept her guests waiting for more than an hour.

Talleyrand's pleasure in his wife had ceased years ago. In his life there was no longer room for her. He found her neither amusing in private nor particularly helpful in his *salon*. Though he still treated her with distant but dignified courtesy in public, he assiduously avoided being alone with her and divided his time more and more between his public duties, gambling, and the company of

his "elderly seraglio," with the Duchess of Courland as his favourite companion. Occasionally, it is true, Catherine was seen at the gambling parties given by the Comtesse Tyskiewitz, which he attended more frequently: but to Madame de Laval's, where he and the Duchess of Courland were regular visitors, she never went.

Yet, though her husband and the Faubourg Saint-Germain treated her coldly, the latter neither expecting nor desiring visits from her, and though she appeared but seldom at Court, she was happy. Fate had elevated her to high rank and the honour of a great name. She was a princess and very rich. Her *salon*, in spite of her unpopularity among her husband's women admirers, was always crowded. She had the companionship of Charlotte, who was "growing quite a big girl and more and more lovable," and she possessed a few good friends, among them the kindly Millin, amateur of the arts, who flattered, admired, and paid her gallant court. And still the Spanish princes lived in their gilded captivity at Valençay and still, more often than ever, the Canon Escoïquitz and the Duc de San Carlos were seen in her *salon*. Louder and more insistent grew the rumour of the supposed liaison between the Duc and the upstart wife of the Prince de Talleyrand, and at last it reached the ears of the Emperor himself. Napoleon was in a quarrelsome mood. Affairs in the Peninsular War had been going badly for France, and Talleyrand's persistent opposition to his ceaseless struggles for conquest deeply incensed him. Angry scenes continually took place between them, and the Emperor had reached the stage when he was ready to use any weapon on which he could lay hands to bring Talleyrand down a peg or two. The rumoured liaison between Catherine and the Spanish duke seemed to him, therefore, a splendid instrument of offence. He chose a levée as the most suitable time to speak of this matter to his Vice-Grand Elector. "It seems to me that Spain has brought us both

bad luck, Monsieur de Talleyrand," he said with coarse mockery before a host of courtiers. "Why did you not tell me that the Duc de San Carlos was your wife's lover?"

"I did not think it redounded either to Your Majesty's honour or mine," came the crushing reply. "In truth, sire, it would have been better, both for Your Majesty's glory and mine, that there never had been anything to do with these Spanish princes." Not a muscle had moved in Talleyrand's face. Only his snakelike eyes gleamed with intense emotion as they stared coldly and fixedly into those of the Emperor.

Without a word Napoleon turned on his heel and walked away. A volcanic rage made his whole body feel as if it were on fire. *Mon Dieu*, but that Talleyrand was insufferable! What did he take himself for, a schoolmaster, that he dared to teach his Emperor a lesson? Ah, but he would be made to suffer for those words. He would be made to suffer.

The Emperor had his revenge. But it was Catherine rather than Talleyrand who was affected by his retaliation. Not only did he close the doors of the Tuileries to her for ever, he also banished the Duc de San Carlos from her *salon* and, by consigning him to the boredom of exile in the sleepy little town of Bourg-en-Bresse, deprived her of a sentimental and delectable companionship.

CHAPTER IX

I

THE BREACH IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE EMPEROR and his Vice-Grand Elector widened till it assumed the appearance of a chasm. Their quarrels grew more bitter and more frequent, and not only did the Emperor heap reproaches on Talleyrand's head but now, too, he began to delve into the past and ask awkward questions. How had Talleyrand managed to amass so great a fortune? What were his winnings at the gaming-tables and how much had he made by speculations on the Stock Exchange? Still digging into bygone scandals the Emperor discovered how once, years ago, Catherine had received 400,000 francs from some Genoese merchants for commercial favours which she had obtained for them from her husband, and what was more, that Talleyrand himself had received a bribe of 4,000,000 francs from the town of Hamburg, which he had spent in buying and furnishing the Hôtel Monaco in the Rue de Varenne. This was too much for Napoleon. The last drop of bitterness had fallen into his cup of anger and now it overflowed. At all costs he would rid himself of the perfidious and mercenary Talleyrand. With coarse brutality he dismissed his Vice-Grand Elector from office, and forced him to give up the magnificent Hôtel Monaco. Talleyrand listened to the Emperor's fuming denunciation of his venality and treachery with serenity as he leant up against a console. He made no reply to the thundered

accusations that were hurled at him. Only when he took his departure did he express his contempt and disdain of the Emperor Napoleon in one immortal sentence. "What a pity that so great a man has been so badly brought up," he muttered as he limped through the courtiers on his way out of the room.

Despite his dismissal he continued to present himself at Court, but with a reserve so haughty that it in no way could be mistaken for humility. Under compulsion he had abandoned the Hôtel Monaco, but very soon he bought and furnished a mansion in the Rue Saint-Florentin, near the Tuileries, an elegant though much smaller dwelling than the palace in the Rue de Varenne. Though he was no longer in office, all Paris flocked to his *salon* where, at the head of two rows of arm-chairs, Catherine still tranquilly did the honours. For Talleyrand, the grand-seigneur and "eternal Bishop of Autun," who had begun his brilliant career in the far-off days of Louis XVI and had, in turn, been President of the Constituent Assembly that organised the French Revolution, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grand Chamberlain and Vice-Grand Elector under the Empire, was still the first man in France in political skill and the art of diplomacy. Still all Europe recognised his genius.

II

During the early part of the year 1811 Catherine was far from well. With the first real warm weather in June, she set out for Aix-les-Bains in the hope of recovering there from her "obstinate ebullition." On her arrival at her destination she wrote to her kind and understanding friend, Millin, amateur of the arts, describing the impressions of her journey to him. In its simplicity and naturalness this letter portrays the real Catherine, an ingenuous creature who too often hid her true personality behind a

screen of arrogant pretentiousness. "I am enchanted, monsieur, with the country I have passed through," she told Millin. "As far as Geneva the views are picturesque or severe, and sometimes frightful. But the approach to Geneva is enchanting. Nothing can equal the beautiful lake that surrounds it; the pretty country houses scattered about make charming views. The summit of Mont Blanc and the glaciers make an imposing crown to these smiling scenes, which one can never grow weary of admiring. As to the town of Aix, monsieur, which one might easily mistake for a wretched village, there is nothing attractive about it, but the environs are varied and picturesque. There are some charming views. The Lake of Bourget has also some merit of its own; it is enclosed by rocks and mountains, it has not the smiling aspect of Geneva, but there is something sombre and melancholy about it: the one invites joy, and the other gentle reveries. . . ."

Aix-les-Bains speedily cured her of her "obstinate ebullition" and she returned to Paris. But in the early autumn she left it again and set out for the Baths of Bourbon-l'Archambault. On this journey, in a sudden mood of eccentricity, she committed her first imprudent act since her marriage to Monsieur de Talleyrand. Rashly she abandoned the straight road to Bourbon-l'Archambault for a circuitous route which, by passing through Bourg-en-Bresse, enabled her once again to see her old friend, the Duc de San Carlos. Ever since his banishment, she had kept up a tenderly friendly correspondence with him, a correspondence which, from necessity, had to be conducted with the strictest secrecy, for the Emperor, and Talleyrand at his request, had sternly forbidden her to have any association whatsoever with the Spaniard. Canon Escoïquitz, however, had proved a discreet intermediary and with his help she had managed to keep in close touch with her exiled friend. To mitigate the tedium of his banishment she wrote him affectionate, gossipy letters in which she

told him about the newest plays at the theatre ; about the actors at the Français, which she frequented regularly ; about books and music and dancing and all the latest society chatter in Paris. She spoke of her home too, of her husband's ability at billiards, of the splendid progress Charlotte was making, and of a new gown or jewel that she had bought. Until that autumn day when a sudden whim made her take the long road to Bourg-en-Bresse, the haughty princess, who so highly prized the name she bore, had, in this friendship, behaved with the greatest discretion and the nicest perception. But perhaps the fact that Talleyrand spent the greater part of this early autumn at St. Germain, where the Duchess of Courland had taken a small château, had a great deal to do with her mood of defiance and the eccentricity of her conduct. Scenes between her husband and herself had been frequent of late. She irritated him, and his attentions to other women often drove her into dark moods of querulous jealousy. The tranquil pleasures of home life had long ceased to exist for both of them. Only at the Duchess of Courland's château at St. Germain, a quaint place that had once been the hunting-box of Henry IV, did Talleyrand find the peace and companionship which his nature demanded. The Duchess was enchanting ; her guests, Madame de Laval, the pretty Saxon Countess Kielmannsegge and the good Nesselrode, most congenial ; and he spent many hours out in the open, riding clumsily on a small chestnut mare " under the tall oaks of the forest and through the fields of roses, swinging his cane the while, faster or slower, according to the speed of his thoughts."

It was at St. Germain, one August evening, that Talleyrand received a letter from the Duke de Rovigo informing him of the secret meeting which Catherine had had with the Duc de San Carlos at Bourg-en-Bresse. The Emperor, declared the Duke, was extremely angry at the *Princesse de*

Talleyrand's disregard of his command and, as a result of her behaviour, was planning to banish her to her estate at Pont-de-Sains. Furthermore, the Emperor had declared that if Talleyrand "could not control his wife's movements" better in future, "the same fate would befall him." The Duke conveyed his unpleasant news in the most painstakingly diplomatic manner. But even his polite words could not hide the contemptible meanness of Napoleon's petty tyranny. Calmly Talleyrand replied to the timely warning, changing and re-writing his reply several times before finally affixing his seal. At one o'clock in the morning he despatched his answer with the same gendarme who had brought him the Duke's communication. At five he himself departed in a carriage for Paris.

That same evening he was back at St. Germain again and in excellent spirits, highly satisfied with his day's work. And well he might be, for he had won a victory over Napoleon in successfully interceding with him on Catherine's behalf. Instead of banishment to Pont-de-Sains she was allowed to return to Paris, but on the strict understanding that she remained quietly and in semi-retirement in her hôtel. Incidentally these restrictions were only of a temporary nature, and were withdrawn soon afterwards.

And meanwhile Talleyrand continued to spend most of his time at St. Germain. The Duchess was so enchanting.

III

On a bleak February night in the year 1812 a dense congestion of carriages and a great throng of people massed in the environs of the Tuileries, for it was in the theatre of this palace, brilliantly decorated and illuminated and turned into a ballroom, that the Queen of Naples was holding her Great Quadrille. Two thousand magnificently-dressed guests—the men in splendid uniforms and glittering

decorations, the women with diamonds and pearls in their hair—filled the great hall, while in the boxes sat fifteen hundred eager spectators. When Napoleon and his Austrian Archduchess had taken their places in the royal box, the pleasures of the evening began. First came a square dance for four couples. The Empress led off with the Prince of Neufchâtel, and with them danced Queen Hortense, Marshal Duroc, Madame Davout, General Nansouty, the Countess Eroy and Prince Aldobrandini. No sooner had the contra-dance come to an end than the great treat of the evening was staged, an interlude portraying the splendours of a new Rome recreated by France. First came a procession of twelve men dressed to represent twelve constellations. They were followed by a body of Roman lictors, who in turn were followed by a band of men representing light stars. Suddenly the music changed its tempo, and a tall and lovely woman stepped into the light and began to dance. In her diary the following day the Countess Kielmannsegge, who was present at the Great Quadrille, in recording the appearance of this enchanting apparition, wrote: "Then followed Iris (Madame Le Grand) in a white and blue robe, a coloured shawl in her hand and a necklace of coloured stones about her throat. She danced first the shawl dance and then a solo, very simply and with grace. Her lovely fair hair adorned her beauty." . . . On this night when the Princesse de Talleyrand—or as the Countess somewhat incorrectly called her, Madame Le Grand—danced in the presence of the Emperor, the Queen of Naples and her three thousand guests, she had but two months more to go before celebrating her fiftieth birthday. Yet she could still dance with elegance and grace, and was delightful to look at in the warm loveliness of her mature beauty.

A few months later Talleyrand and Catherine went to take the waters at Bourbon-l'Archambault. They were

on friendly terms again. "Madame de Talleyrand," the prince wrote in a letter from the spa in June, "reads to me every night in French."

Catherine was far from well on their return to Paris. A bad digestion caused her much suffering and discomfort. During the two years that followed, ill-health took sad toll of her figure and complexion. She began to put on flesh. Her lissom body lost some of its suppleness and indolent grace, and her chiselled features something of their delicacy. The pink and white texture of her skin often became transfused with a hectic flush, and in her abundant and beautiful golden hair nestled, though inconspicuously it is true, a few fine threads of grey. Yet serenely, "wearing the remains of her great beauty like a crown," she sat at the end of the long row of arm-chairs in Talleyrand's *salon* and, with dignity and grace, did the honours of the Hôtel Saint-Florentin.

It was here, early in the year 1814, that suddenly one day she was brought face to face with a ghost from the past and the memory of a night when the most beautiful courtesan and the handsomest man in Paris dined strangely together for the first time and the last. For the ghost that confronted her that day was Edouard Dillon, whose niece, the Comtesse de Boigne, brought him to the Hôtel Saint-Florentin to call on Talleyrand and his princess. And Dillon, who had not set foot in Paris for twenty-seven years, was still handsome, still most gallant.

As the carriage trundled on its way to the Rue Saint-Florentin, Dillon sat wrapped in silence beside his niece. Ever and again a smile touched his lips for an instant.

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He laughed and looked at his niece amusedly. "Ah well, since I see that you are consumed with curiosity," he teased, "I shall put you out of your agony, my dear. Besides, the contrast between this visit, and the only one I paid formerly to the *Princesse de Talleyrand*, is so amusing, that I cannot resist telling you of my last and only interview with her." Quietly, then, like a man looking at his lost youth through a telescope, he spoke of the night that he had dined with the loveliest courtesan in Paris and she had sat at table "naked and unashamed," "like a second Eve before any dress material had been invented."

"It will be amusing to see what her attitude will be towards you," his niece declared.

"It will be curious," he answered.

A few minutes later they were announced at the *Hôtel Saint-Florentin* and entered the *salon*. Catherine received them charmingly. With not so much as the flicker of an eyelash did she reveal the strange thoughts that flashed through her mind when Dillon was presented to her. She greeted him as if she had never before set eyes on him. Then she invited the Countess to take the seat at her side and Dillon, bowing, moved slightly behind his niece's chair.

The conversation for the first few minutes concerned itself entirely with the weather, but at last, adroitly, Catherine changed the subject by admiring the bonnet which the *Comtesse de Boigne* was wearing. It was charming, she declared, quite the most becoming bonnet that she had seen for a long time. How perfectly it suited the wearer! But then, of course, the *Comtesse* had such beautiful hair. Was it very long, and did it reach far below the shoulders? Indeed! But how enchanting! And now suddenly, turning her head and looking at Dillon with innocent *naïveté* and perfect gravity, she said: "Monsieur Dillon, you like beautiful hair, do you not?"

IV

"I shall have war with Russia on grounds which lie beyond human possibilities, because they are rooted in the case itself," Napoleon told Metternich in the autumn after his marriage with Marie Louise. Two years later he had his war. For a month he waited with his army in Moscow for the surrender of Czar Alexander. It did not come. Now it dawned on him that if he was to avoid the gruelling horror of a Russian winter, he must retire immediately. The retreat began, but it began too late. He had to pay for the greatest error in his career with half a million men. Back in Paris, he turned again to Talleyrand, whose venality and deceit he despised, but of whose diplomatic skill he now had the greatest need. He offered him the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. Talleyrand refused. This man who had already sold the Directory to the Consulate and the Consulate to the Empire was much too busy negotiating to sell the Emperor Napoleon to his enemies. His mansion in the Rue Saint-Florentin had become the centre of anti-Napoleonic intrigue. Here, secretly, he gathered about him the leaders of the discontented faction in France, a faction, wearied by war and surfeited with glory, which clamoured for peace and security and the return of the Bourbons.

But Talleyrand had other worries besides those of political intrigue. A series of domestic troubles now came to disturb his mind more surely than politics ever had done. For at this time, when he was sixty years of age, a spectre of a man limping on one leg, he fell prey to an unquenchable passion for Dorothea, the young and beautiful wife of his nephew Edmond de Périgord and the daughter of his most ardent and recent adorer, the Duchess of Courland. The affair plunged the Duchess into an agony of despair.

Envious of her daughter's triumph she began to embarrass Talleyrand with her jealousy. Her angry and violently-expressed resentment at having been supplanted in his affections by Dorothea, drove him into a frenzy of irritation. Now too, as if so unpleasant a situation was not perplexing enough, he was faced by further annoyances from his wife.

Catherine detested Dorothea de Périgord. Haughtily and with studied pettiness she consistently referred to her as "Madame Edmond." She loathed Talleyrand's niece by marriage as much for her youth as for the passion that the new adorer had awakened in her husband's heart. For the tragedy of advancing age and fading beauty terrified Catherine. The realisation that she was growing old made her weep like a child for days on end. Indeed, her ill-temper really only began when she first discovered that she was growing fat. Poor Catherine. Life had taught her many things, but the gentle art of growing old gracefully was not one of them. So she continued to weep for the bloom of youth and the passing years. Her nerves grew fretful and she was full of uncontrolled complaints. She quarrelled with Talleyrand and heaped reproaches on his head for his gross infidelity—censure to which he listened calmly behind a mask of rigid self-control, saying little in reply or defence. But neither his wife's querulous upbraiding nor the Duchess of Courland's despair in the slightest degree quenched the fire of his passion for Dorothea de Périgord.

CHAPTER X

I

“**Y**OU ARE GROPING ABOUT LIKE CHILDREN WHEN you ought to be walking on stilts. You can do all that you want to ; please do all that you can. You know the sign. Have confidence in the one that gives it to you.” These words, written by Talleyrand in sympathetic ink, reached the headquarters of the armies of England, Russia, Prussia and Austria on a small piece of creased and tattered paper. It was that scandalous conspirator’s final hint to the allies that, with Napoleon’s military power smashed by the great Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, the road to Paris lay clear and open before them.

On the 31st March the Czar Alexander, the King of Prussia and Prince von Schwarzenberg entered Paris at the head of the allied troops. The war was over. The city had capitulated. The soldiers of the allies marched through strangely silent streets in which only a few white cockades and fluttering handkerchiefs greeted them from the sidewalks. The shadow of Napoleon still hung threateningly over the outskirts of the city. But when they reached the Place Vendôme everything was changed. Here the anti-national party, chiefly composed of the nobility, welcomed them with excitement and loud cries of “*Vive le roi !*” Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld tied a rope round the statue of Napoleon in order to drag it from its column, and in an open carriage a richly-gowned lady drove through the streets before the advancing column

"singing hymns to the pious Bourbons." It was Catherine de Talleyrand. . . .

The Czar took up his residence at Talleyrand's house in the Rue Saint-Florentin, and there a conference was held. "Well, here we are at last in the famous Paris," said the Russian Emperor. "Now there are three things we can do: we can treat with the Emperor Napoleon, we can establish a regency or recall the Bourbons."

"The Emperor is wrong," replied Talleyrand. "There are not three things we can do: there is only one, and that is the last he has mentioned."

Two days later Napoleon was formally deposed by the Senate, a provisional government was set up under Talleyrand, and the French people called to the throne of their country "Louis Stanislas Xavier of France, brother of the last King, and after him other members of the House of Bourbon in the old order." On the 12th of April Monsieur, the Comte d'Artois, entered Paris as Lieutenant-Governor of the Kingdom in the absence of Louis XVIII, whose gout still held him captive in England. The following day Napoleon was compelled to accept the Treaty of Fontainebleau and the cold comfort of Elba "in full sovereignty and a pension of two million francs for himself." When at last, three weeks later, Louis himself entered the capital of France, Monsieur de Talleyrand's work in establishing the Restoration was completed. And once again he was Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During these wildly exciting and historic weeks, Talleyrand and Catherine were seldom to be found under the same roof. The last link which had bound them to each other had been severed by Charlotte's marriage to one of Talleyrand's nephews. Now, for the most part, Catherine lived in the mansion in the Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré when she was in Paris, and it was Dorothéa de Périgord who on special occasions, such as the visit of the Czar of Russia, acted as hostess in the Rue Saint-Florentin.

Yet, strangely enough, at this period Talleyrand's marriage suddenly caused a new crop of sarcasms and malicious taunts. Too many people in the Court of the Restoration remembered him only as the Bishop of Autun. To them his amazing marriage, even after twelve years, still assumed the proportions of a juicy scandal. Even the newspapers made ill-disposed jests about it. "Paris, 6th May, 1814. Yesterday after Mass, the Bishop of Autun had the honour of presenting his wife to the son of Saint Louis," ran a mischievous paragraph in the *Nain jaune*, a jeering pin-prick which that paper published as a supposed reprint from an English periodical.

Ensconced in a powerful position, Talleyrand could afford to turn a disdainfully deaf ear to the gibes of the new Court, society and the Press. But in the end, even his phlegmatic nature revolted against this continuous chastisement, and he proposed himself for the Congress of Vienna. Three plenipotentiaries were appointed to accompany him. His wife, it was arranged, would remain in Paris. He was already well on his way to Vienna when Catherine was indiscreetly informed that Dorothea de Périgord had secretly met him at a country house near Paris and had accompanied him to the Austrian capital. This disconcerting news, told to her with sugared malice in a crowded drawing-room on the afternoon after her husband's departure, made her turn very pale. Though she tried to keep calm, she could not disguise her unhappy anxiety. A sinister foreboding took possession of her, and when at last she was alone, she abandoned herself to tears of jealousy and humiliation. But what could she do? What would be best for her to do? At all costs she must avoid a break with Talleyrand who held the purse-strings, and remain quietly and with docility in Paris. Yes, unquestionably, that was the wisest course to follow. . . . Years later, Talleyrand in his memoirs dismissed this incident in his life with a few brief words.

"It appeared to me also that it was necessary to make the French Embassy attractive. I then asked my niece, the Comtesse de Périgord, to accompany me and do the honours of my house. By her superior intellect and tact she knew how to please."

So, while Dorothéa was pleasing Talleyrand and the guests at the French embassy at Vienna, Catherine lived through the days in Paris. She speculated on Exchange and made a considerable income for herself. She was sometimes seen at receptions wearing singularly eccentric clothes, such as "a scarlet cashmere pelisse, secured up the front by a profusion of gold cord and tassels and a gold tissue turban." Society tolerated her with amused indulgence for, when everything had been weighed and considered, one had to remember that this eccentric and rather stout woman who yet carried the remains of her great beauty regally, was still the wife of the most powerful statesman in France.

II

When the discussions of the Congress of Vienna were at their height, the thunder of Napoleon once again resounded across Europe. Escaping from Elba he landed near Cannes and, with less than a thousand men, marched on to Lyons. There he assumed imperial power again. With the army flocking to his standard, he took the road that led to Paris. He met no obstacle on his way. France was entranced with admiration at the miracle of this march. "This is greater than Cæsar or Alexander; 'tis Jupiter. This is no longer History; 'tis the most prodigious Fable"—sounded but the echo of men's minds. The Bourbons melted before his advance. A King without an army was no King, and Louis fled on his gouty legs to Ghent, while Talleyrand, the maker and destroyer of rulers and governments, hastily left Vienna for Carlsbad, declaring coldly

that "the first duty of a diplomat after a congress was to attend to his liver."

On the 20th of March the Emperor Napoleon, amid scenes of wild and passionate enthusiasm, once again took possession of the Tuileries. The day after his arrival Royalists and generals and even priests flocked to the palace to humble themselves before him. Catherine de Talleyrand, however, was not among the eager supplicants. At the first clap of thunder which had heralded the miracle of the Emperor's return, she had disappeared from France. At this crisis in her life she made the most glaring blunder of her whole career, for instead of hastening to join her husband either at Vienna or Carlsbad, she fled to London with the idea of remaining there until the destruction of Napoleon had been finally effected by the allies. Actually she had to wait but one hundred days for, with defeat turned into a rout at Waterloo, Napoleon fled to Paris and abdicated for the second time. The wars that had devastated Europe for twenty-two years were at an end; the *Bellerophon* carried the little Corsican to St. Helena; Louis XVIII once again sat on the throne of France, and Talleyrand was his Prime Minister.

But now, when Catherine turned longing eyes to her beloved Paris, she found her vision blurred by a dense fog of dissension and unhappiness. Talleyrand would not allow her to return. Concealing his real reason beneath a variety of assumed excuses, he kept her in London while he thought out the best way of ridding himself of her for all time. For Monsieur de Talleyrand was prodigiously tired of his wife. Middle age had made her grow fat and rather heavy, very red in the face and far from good-tempered. He was passionately in love with his young, beautiful and witty niece, Dorothea de Périgord, who now did the honours of the Rue Saint-Florentin with, so he considered, infinitely more grace and tact than Catherine had ever possessed. In short,

there was no longer any room for his wife either in his heart or his house. Her return to Paris would only prove an unpleasant annoyance and embarrassment to him. In the circumstances, therefore, he came to the conclusion that, since she was in England, it would be a very good thing if she remained there permanently.

With this decision fixed in his mind, he wrote to the Marquis d'Osmond, the recently appointed ambassador to London, authorising him to bring Catherine "to reason" by persuading her to remain in England. Though this commission was not at all to Monsieur d'Osmond's taste, he dared not refuse to execute it, for it was through Talleyrand's influence that he had been assigned the London embassy. The task proved both difficult and unpleasant. Catherine fumed and fretted. She complained that the Thames fogs did not agree with her health and that it was essential to her well-being that she return to Paris as soon as possible. In the end, however, the pressure brought to bear on her was so great that despite her lamentations she submitted, in part, to her husband's final decision. Her reason was simple enough. Not lacking in common sense she realised that, with Dorothéa firmly established in the Rue Saint-Florentin, there could not possibly be room for both her and "Madame Edmond" under the same roof. On the other hand, any attempt to drive her rival away would not only lead to endless scenes for which she felt unprepared, but would in all probability place her in even worse odium with Talleyrand.

"I am suffering as I deserve for yielding to an impulse of false pride," she told the Marquis d'Osmond's wife one afternoon. "I was aware of the position of Madame Edmond in Talleyrand's house in Vienna, but I did not wish to be a witness to it. This sensitiveness prevented me from joining him, as I should have done when the Emperor's return from Elba obliged me to leave Paris. If I had gone to Vienna instead of London, Monsieur de

Talleyrand would have been obliged to receive me. And I know well that he would have received me with great kindness. Whatever he might have felt," she added with acute judgment of her husband's character, "he would have shown no irritation. On the contrary, I know full well that he would have treated me with cordiality. But," she added pathetically, "I had a horror of that woman, to which I yielded, though wrongly. My mistake was that I thought him too weak to dare to send me away. I had not taken into account that a coward may grow courageous in the absence of the enemy ! I have made a mistake and must bear the consequences and I do not wish to aggravate the situation by a rebellious attitude. I give in and Monsieur de Talleyrand will find me quite ready to avoid anything that might increase the scandal."

At this moment of her life Catherine de Talleyrand behaved like a very great lady indeed. Having once fully realised that the worst possible injury she could do herself and her husband was to air their private disagreements and miseries in public, she stole the honours of tradition and good breeding from Talleyrand by her calm and judicious conduct. Having made a great blunder, she resigned herself to bear the results. Talleyrand had closed the gates of Paris in her face. Very well then, for the time being, she would not go to Paris. But neither would she stay in London. At all costs she was determined to cross the Channel once again. And she did.

In the spring of 1816 she left England for France and journeyed to Pont-de-Sains, the estate in the Département du Nord, south of Avesnes, which her husband had given her as a marriage settlement. It was her intention to reside at Pont-de-Sains throughout the summer and to spend the winter in Brussels. Talleyrand, fearing the consequences of further protest, allowed her to have her way.

III

But Dorothea de Périgord was not satisfied. Pont-de-Sains, so close to Avesnes, was very near Paris. What was to prevent Catherine from suddenly reappearing in Talleyrand's household? she demanded. She was quite prepared to keep house for her uncle, but on no account would she tolerate a common parvenue, like her aunt. Talleyrand must either rid himself finally and completely of the millstone round his neck or she would leave the Rue Saint-Florentin. "I have thought a good deal of Madame de Talleyrand's answer," she informed him, "which makes me fear that she will walk into your room some fine day. She will say at first that she only means to stay an hour, but wants a personal explanation from you; all in the hope of getting more money. The only proper thing for both of you is that she should remain in England, since Europe is destined to possess this treasure. Looking as she does she can hardly dare to talk of the bad influence of the climate, which she has borne very well several times. It is quite clear that what she wants is to stay in France or the Low Countries. She thinks that in her own interests she ought to be as near Paris as possible! . . . As money is the chief motive of all Madame de Talleyrand's actions, one should always act towards her from that point of view and I will venture accordingly to give you a piece of advice that will spare you a public correspondence which would be distasteful to you. Send someone to her at once. . . . Send Monsieur Perry with a sort of letter of credit and let him tell Madame de Talleyrand from you that she shall not touch a farthing of the income you allow her until she is in England, and that elsewhere she will not get a halfpenny. Let Monsieur Perry go with her to Calais or Ostend and stay there until he has seen her

embark. I assure you this is good advice and you will be wrong not to follow it."

Talleyrand, shuddering at the thought of his wife's reappearance in Paris and terrified at the idea of losing Dorothea, screwed his courage to the sticking point and determined to settle this vexing question once and for all. Though he found it impossible to follow his niece's advice *in toto*, he obeyed it in part by commanding Catherine to remain strictly at Pont-de-Sains, with the added threat that if she ever dared to set foot in Paris, he would immediately stop her allowance.

This blow to her pride was too much for Catherine. She rebelled angrily and applied to the Duke of Wellington, begging him to intercede with her husband on her behalf. But Talleyrand refused to listen to talks of reconciliation. He was heartily sick of the whole business. To add to his aggravation, Paris society, amused by his domestic dissensions, made a popular song out of a stupid quatrain by a topical poetaster, in which his name was joined together with that of Chateaubriand:

*" Au diable soient les mœurs ! disait Chateaubriand,
Il faut auprès de moi que ma femme revienne.
Je rends grace aux mœurs, répliquait Talleyrand,
Je puis enfin répudier la mienne."*

Determinedly he refused to be pacified. He felt no sympathy for his wife's weeping and lamentations and insisted that she must remain strictly at Pont-de-Sains or she would feel the consequence of his displeasure.

Pathetically at this time Catherine wrote to her friend, the Chevalier Millin: "I can only say that I put all my trust in Providence; gentleness and patience is all that I have ever opposed to the selfishness and harshness with which I am treated." . . . The estrangement from Talleyrand left an aching void in her heart. Lonely and

miserable, she begged Millin to pay her a visit at Pont-de-Sains, an invitation which, unfortunately, he found it impossible to accept at that time.

"I am extremely sorry that you cannot come and breathe the air of the woods, which is said to be very beneficial," she replied to his letter of regret. "It is a real privation for me, Monsieur, which I will add to those with which Providence has overwhelmed me since I was obliged to leave my home in March 1815. I shall prolong my stay here as long as the season will permit. I came for the sake of economy, having no horses nor any source of expense, not wishing to contract debts, and having charges to which I consider myself bound, and you know that the pension I receive from the Prince, my husband, is 30,000 francs; and no cherished or valuable article was given to me; and I sold some jewels to buy furniture, china and table napkins, having nothing before me for the tranquillity of my soul but to have patience. Amen. The torrents of bitterness which I have drunk make me indifferent to these petty annoyances."

She was very unhappy and bitterly hurt by her husband's conduct and the crushing blows to her rank and dignity. Yet her letters to friends in Paris were full of questions about Talleyrand. How was he looking? Was he well? Was he in Paris or at Valençay? What *was* going on at her old home in Berry? Her thoughts were often at the Château of Valençay. She dreamt about it at night, longing for it with passionate nostalgia. To Millin she wrote touchingly: "If you should have any pleasant details of the pleasures of Valençay, you know, Monsieur le Chevalier, that Valençay is still as much my home as my present domicile. . . ."

The months passed. She was bored to distraction. There was no joy for her at Pont-de-Sains. The house itself was small—she spoke of it as "this little cottage, for it is really that, and not a château." It stood in the

middle of a meadow completely surrounded by a forest. When one looked out of a window one saw nothing but the thick swaying branches of tall trees. There was no other view. The nearest neighbour lived a long way off and stray travellers seldom passed that way. Occasionally the authorities of Avesnes arrived to pay their respects to the *Princesse de Bénévent*; and once an American woman for whom she had a great affection—the *Comtesse Hérachim de Polignac*, accompanied her husband, who had secured a place in the Princess's regard "because he is perfect to his wife's family"—came to stay with her for a short while. But visitors were rare, and she dared not even invite her good friend the *Duc de San Carlos* to cheer her exile. Day followed day and nothing ever seemed to happen at Pont-de-Sains. The most exciting event of months was the stampede of a herd of wild boar through the park one night. The "little cottage" was a hermit's retreat. Here one could meditate and dream and study in peace. But Catherine was not made for solitude. She could neither meditate nor dream. Hungrily she yearned for the sensual world that she loved, the world of society, gaiety and luxury. She pined and fretted and filled the long weary hours with reading and music, fishing and bathing in "a little river only four feet wide, but the water is very limpid." At last she could bear the ennui of peace and quietude no longer, and in a mood of frenzied despair, left Pont-de-Sains in the autumn of 1817.

Her arrival in Paris was quite unexpected. Even Talleyrand had received no warning of her intended return. Perplexed and indignant, he met the ironic mockery of society with haughtiness and satirical contempt. Even the King was made to feel the sting of his tongue. "Is it true that the Princess is back?" Louis asked him one day at a *levée*, thinking to have a sly little joke of his own at the expense of the grand-seigneur's embarrassing position.

Talleyrand met the royal eye arrogantly. How dare that "fat daddy" laugh at him! Had he forgotten how he had run to Ghent as fast as his gouty legs could carry him, on the 19th of March, that day before Napoleon's triumphant reoccupation of the Tuileries? "Nothing is more true, sire," he answered with frigid hauteur, "for it seems that I too had to have my 20th of March!"

Catherine neither forced her way into her old home in the Rue Saint-Florentin nor tried to seek a "personal explanation" from her husband. She adhered to the decision which she had made in London not to do anything that would "aggravate the situation." That she was in Paris again meant much to her. In the suburb of Auteuil she rented the villa Beauséjour, and there for a while she sunned herself in Talleyrand's reflected glory. For though they lived so near to each other, she never saw her husband again.

If Paris did not assuage the ache in Catherine's heart caused by Talleyrand's treatment of her, it at least cured her of the ennui which had prostrated her at Pont-de-Sains. And she had memories.

BOOK VI
THE LAST ACT

CHAPTER I

THE VILLA BEAUSÉJOUR IN THE SUBURB OF AUTEUIL which Catherine de Talleyrand, Princesse de Bénévent, rented from Monsieur Beauvais on her return to Paris, was a spacious residence surrounded by tall trees and a pretty formal garden. To the overwrought princess who had fled from the bleak inhospitality of Pont-de-Sains, this villa seemed a paradise. A very considerable income—for, in addition to the interest which she derived from her personal speculations, Talleyrand made her a liberal allowance—enabled her to live in that style and luxury to which the years had accustomed her. She kept a large staff of servants, employed secretaries and lady-companions, entertained lavishly and, on fixed days, received not only members of fashionable society but also savants and men of letters. In short, she laboured with painstaking deliberation to make the villa Beauséjour—in the general routine of its household, the hospitality of its table and the entertainments of its drawing-room—an exact replica of Talleyrand's *ménage* in the days when she was its hostess.

Poor discarded princess! How great was her appetite for the good things of the world, for magnificence and rich living! She could not turn her back upon the world. Peace and seclusion were anathema to her. If she could no longer play the part of Talleyrand's presiding goddess, she determined, at least, to act the goddess in her own

salon. Desperately she clung to this poor misty shadow of her former life which she created at the villa Beauséjour. If, at times, the memories of her former glory brought her moments of anguish and melancholy, these soon passed. She tried to forget that she had grown very corpulent, and instead, prided herself on her "air of spirituality." Tightly she shut her eyes to the fact that her skin was flushed and very red, and consoled herself that it still remained unwrinkled and looked well by candlelight. She would not and could not realise that Talleyrand and Time, the one by withholding the flashlight brilliance of his power and glory, the other by pilfering her beauty, had stolen her thunder and that, without a background and without beauty, she was but a pathetically ageing woman who often made herself ridiculous by her arrogance and her absurd preoccupation with her rank.

The years had sadly changed her pretty will-o'-the-wisp whims and fancies into puerile vanities and irrational eccentricities. About many things she often behaved with the strangest singularity of conduct, but about nothing was she more eccentric than her nobility. She took a childish pride in her title and allowed no one to forget for one moment that she was a princess. In strange ways and with overbearing arrogance she demanded that homage should be done to her rank. Even the elderly countess of the ancien régime who, at one time, acted as her companion at the villa Beauséjour, was not allowed to forget that she was *only* a countess and that Catherine de Talleyrand was a princess. It was not that Catherine disliked her companion. On the contrary, she was on the friendliest terms with the old lady and extremely fond of her. But she liked it to be remembered that there was a time and a place for the expression of this fond friendliness. So it happened that whenever she took a walk—and the countess always had to accompany her—there were angry scenes, for she insisted with fiery petulance

that, in deference to her rank, her companion should not walk at her side but must follow her at a short distance behind. If by any chance the old countess approached too close, Madame la Princesse would stop, turn round haughtily and demand, with crushing reproof: "*Comtesse, vous perdez le respect ?*"

Yet for all her eccentricities and faults, and she had many, Catherine de Talleyrand was still lovable to those who really understood her. She was a foolish, vain and arrogant old martinet, but she could, when she liked, be gentle and sympathetic and very tender. She possessed, too, a real and deep appreciation of kindness.

II

Talleyrand, at this time, was living in retirement, a retirement which was to last for fifteen years. In Paris, at his mansion in the Rue Saint-Florentin, he spent the long winter months; his summers, except for occasional visits to Switzerland, the Pyrenees or his beloved Bourbon l'Archambault, were passed at Valençay, from which he had effaced all the scars and marks left by those unwanted guests of long ago, the Spanish princes. At the Rue Saint-Florentin, as at Valençay—where he played the part of country squire, endowed an alms-house and a school and enriched the church with the gift of a belfry—brilliant assemblies still gathered about him. Though he looked like a ghost dragging its leg, he had lost neither his charm of manner nor his sparkle of mind, and as ever he could dominate a room full of people by the power of his genius. Old age had made as little difference to the rich, grave tones of his voice as to his habits. He still sought the comfort of his bed only in the small hours of the morning; still rose early; still spent hours over his toilet.

It was at Valençay rather than at the Rue Saint-Florentin

that this man who had helped to make history in Europe for forty years, held his little court. The château was always full of visitors. Here, as at his Paris mansion, Dorothea de Périgord with her quick, clever mind and large, dark eyes acted as his hostess and never left his side. The years had made her forget the passion she had once felt for a young Austrian count, a passion which had caused her husband's uncle so much unhappiness at the time of the Congress of Vienna. She had sacrificed love for ambition and had gained the distinction of playing Egeria to the most famous and powerful man in France, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand. Edmond de Périgord, her husband, for whom she had borne two sons, had long since ceased to matter in her life. Indeed, she had not lived in his house for many years. In 1820 they were reconciled, but after a short time, and to Dorothea's great gratification, Edmond returned to his own life and she to hers with Talleyrand. At Valençay she became "spiritual with pregnancy," and there she gave birth to a daughter whom she called Pauline. So passionately devoted to the child was Talleyrand that eager-tongued Gossip, with jest and snigger, crowned him at the age of nearly seventy with the honour of progeniture. . . .

But time was speeding on. With relentless fingers Death turned the yellowing leaves of Talleyrand's Book of Life. Each passing year took toll of friends and enemies who had formed the web and woof of his existence. In 1817 Madame de Staël died. Four years later Madame de Rémusat, whose happy friendship he had won in the days of the Consulate, and the Duchess of Courland whom once he had loved so passionately and who had lived to see her place in his affections taken by her daughter Dorothea, were laid in their graves. In this same year, too, on the rocky island of St. Helena, the mighty heart of the Little Corsican gave its last beat.

Talleyrand was one of the guests in a crowded drawing-

room on the night when the report of Napoleon's death reached Paris. For a moment after the announcement had been made it seemed as if no one breathed. Men and women stiffened in their chairs and sat strangely dumb. The silence was shattered by the uttering of three words. "What an event!" someone exclaimed.

"It is no longer an event, it is only a piece of news," a rich, grave voice said quietly in a far corner of the room. Talleyrand had spoken. . . .

In the year 1828, the Duc de San Carlos, who had played so strange a part in Catherine's life, went to his eternal rest. When Talleyrand was told the news he seemed deeply touched, so much so that his informant interrupted his expressions of regret by remarking with dry malice: "He was certainly a fine man, Monsieur de Talleyrand, but I did not know you were so attached to him."

"I will explain," said Talleyrand. "The Duc de San Carlos was my wife's lover; he was an honourable man and gave her good advice. I don't know into whose hand she will fall now."

How fiercely that affair of long ago still rankled in his mind! But had he ever really believed that the gallant Spaniard had been his wife's lover? Who can tell? Talleyrand always wore a mask and believed anything when it suited his purpose. He could be very bitter, very cruel and utterly merciless in his cynicism. In pitiless heartlessness he uttered those words: "I don't know into whose hands she will fall now," for he knew only too well how Catherine at this time and in this, her sixty-sixth year, was living in sad loneliness, and how her thoughts ever turned only inwards and backwards, to the past and to him.

With shuffling feet the cavalcade of death passed on its way, yet still a noble band of devoted satellites remained to light the earthly road along which old Talleyrand

limped. Montrond still chattered wittily, albeit a little wheezily; the Countess Tyskiewitz's glass eye shone with its old adoration; Dorothea was still his splendid Egeria and Pauline his "guardian angel" . . . There was so much to remind him of the past. . . . As if his mind was not already a rich enough store-room of remembrances, he opened the doors of his house wide to young Delacroix, the painter, son of that Madame Delacroix who had been ousted from his affections so many years ago by Madame Grand, the courtesan. And he named his favourite spaniel "Carlos" in memory of a once dashing Spanish don.

III

Catherine, too, had her memories, but for the most part they were sad, because she herself sat bowed in melancholy despair. Separation from Talleyrand had broken her spirit. His withdrawal from her life had left a vacuum which, try as she might, nothing seemed to fill. Slowly but surely as the years slipped by, she sank into an old age of physical suffering and loneliness. Year by year, too, Death reaped his harvest among those whom once she had known and loved, and who had helped to form the curious pattern of her life. In England, in the year 1818, just four months after the passing of his old enemy Warren Hastings, Sir Philip Francis died "almost in his sleep," at the age of seventy-eight. Catherine had not seen him for close on sixteen years, not since before her marriage with Talleyrand. During her last migration to England, at the time of the Hundred Days, he had made no effort to visit her—"the dread of losing his recollections of her in sad realities prevented him from wishing to see or be seen by her . . . as he heard from those of his friends who had renewed their acquaintance . . . that it was impossible to recognise all those Venus-like

charms which were celebrated from the Indus to the Ganges and inspired his muse on the Banks of the Seine and the Thames." . . . Now he was dead, Philip Francis who, by his desire for her, had set her feet upon the road which she was to follow for so many years. Catherine wept for him and for an old passion so long kept fragrant by the potpourri of memory.

Two years later George François Grand, who had made a child-wife of the little daughter of Pierre Werlée, was buried at the Cape of Good Hope. He had married again, and was happy in his second marriage, though never with life as a whole. The Consulting Councillorship to the Batavian Republic, which Catherine had obtained for him in the year of her marriage to Talleyrand, had terminated when the Cape was taken over by the British in 1806. Then the new English Governor had appointed him to the post of "Inspector of H.M.'s Woods and Lands." This office he had retained for only a short time. No further appointment followed the loss of this post, and poor, grumbling, quarrelsome Grand spent the remainder of his life at the Cape inundating successive Governors with boisterous letters demanding favoured employment and innumerable indulgences. Much of his time, too, he gave to writing his *Narrative*, published in 1814, in which he told the whole story of his life so "chequered with vicissitudes." When his last will and testament was opened after his death a codicil was found attached to it. "Finally I request my first wife, since the Princess of Talleyrand," ran a paragraph of this supplementary note, "to extend a Portion of the annuity which, out of Consideration and Regard for my conduct towards her during my prosperous career in life, she tendered in my adversity, viz : as is comprised in my *Narrative*, a handsome pension for life to enjoy where I pleased. I entreat her with my last Breath to allow half the said amount to my present and second wife, during her life and in the assur-

ance of the sentiments and goodness which during a happy time I experienced with my first wife that she was blessed with, I comfort myself whilst still living, that my Prayer and Entreaty to Her will not have been made in vain." . . .

IV

At this time Catherine, who had moved from the villa Beauséjour at Auteuil, had taken a house in Paris itself, in the Rue de Lille. Here, for several years, she entertained on the same scale as she had done at the villa. Flatterers still gathered about her. In their servile words she found a certain comfort, for they reminded her of the days of her glory and made her forget the corpulence and pain of her ageing body. Still, as ever, she was pathetically blinded by the proud dignity of her rank, and still she played the haughty, arrogant princess.

Every year, on the King's birthday, in August, she gave a party. Poets, savants and people of society sat at her table ; foreigners, especially Englishmen, were invited to her house ; and in her drawing-room many an author, anxious to secure an audience, gave the first reading of his unpublished work. In 1822, Viennet declaimed his new tragedy *Achille* at one of her receptions and, during his two years of exile, Thomas Moore, the poet who had fled from England to evade arrest, was a frequent visitor at the Rue de Lille. Many a night there he delighted his hostess and her assembled guests with recitals of his poetry. For Catherine was still striving desperately to imitate the splendour that she had once known in Talleyrand's *salon*. The routine of her household was modelled with scrupulous exactness on that of the Rue Saint-Florentin, and almost everything about her spoke of her memories of the days of her grandeur. The past had become her mania. Deliberately she packed every room of her house

with eloquent witnesses to her undying remembrances of her former magnificence. Wherever she looked, symbols of bygone days met her eyes. The clock on the mantelpiece, her favourite arm-chair, the rug before the fireplace, the embroidered cushion on which she rested her feet, even the lawn handkerchief which she held in her hand—all these were conspicuously decorated with the emblem and the *Re que Dieu* of the Talleyrand armorial device. The little cage in which she kept her much-loved pets, a pair of snow-white dormice, was an exact model of the Château of Valençay, exquisitely made and perfect in every detail of dome and towers.

In her memory, Valençay shone as the most priceless jewel in the diadem of her departed greatness. She carried its picture in her heart. The château had become the altar of her lost happiness. She never spoke of it without weeping, yet desired to speak of it often. She would sit for hours recounting the joys that she had once experienced there, even the least of them, and delving into her memory, would explain the genealogy of every family on the neighbouring estates with the greatest care and deliberation. Vividly she recalled every detail of her life at Valençay and of the château itself—the parklands and the rivers, the deep moat and the high towers, the lilac-scented alleys and the cooing wood-pigeons, the names of the curé and the maire and of the meanest provincial whom once she had known. Her love for Valençay was almost fanatical in its fervour. She had been so happy there as the wife of France's greatest diplomat—the mighty Talleyrand, whom she had last seen on the day when he set out in a carriage for the Congress of Vienna. Years had passed since that day, and these had dulled her anguished resentment of his treatment of her. There was no longer bitterness in her heart against him. Indeed she had begun to yearn towards him again and to think only tenderly of this man who had ceased to love

her so long ago. In everything connected with him and with his life, she now took the most touching interest. She never tired of asking questions, or of listening to the smallest crumbs of news about the Rue Saint-Florentin and Valençay. What was Talleyrand doing there? How did he look? Was he well? At what hours did he take his meals? What did he eat? Did he still rise so early in the morning? She spoke of him eagerly and always with sincere and unaffected admiration, praising his great talents and brilliance, and never by so much as a word condemning his treatment of her. Through the fading years and the mists of memory she seemed to see her husband anew, with a halo of her own making about his head.

To Talleyrand, however, in spite of the years, his wife still remained a disturbing element. She was out of his life and yet in it. He longed to lay the ghost and could not. The allowance which he made to her, with secret unwillingness but punctilious regularity, served to keep her fresh in his memory. Still, he was prepared to forgive her her existence provided she behaved like a well-trained and obedient ghost and flitted only through the thin air on the far horizon of his life. Since certain circumstances prevented him from completely erasing her from his mind he was quite courteous and attentive to her—at a distance. Regularly on certain annual festivals, such as New Year's day or when he heard that she was suffering from some slight indisposition, he sent members of his household to call and pay their respects to her, and always they came heavily laden with polite and elegantly worded messages of good wishes from the Prince. Catherine, Princesse de Talleyrand, who had once demanded so much of him, now accepted these crumbs of his favour with pathetic joy and found them precious as pearls. She had grown so lonely. Year by year, as the company in her drawing-room dwindled, she became a little sadder, a little more dejected. She was often ill. She realised

only too well that she was being neglected and forsaken by the gay society which once she had so deeply loved. To her few close friends who remained loyal to her, she clung tenaciously, and these and her still burning pride and vanity in her nobility cheered her darkening days.

witty old Montrond was his friend, and still Dorothea was his muse, and Pauline his "guardian angel."

II

But Catherine, his wife, living in loneliness in her house in the Rue de Lille, renamed the Rue de Bourbon since the Restoration, had nothing to compensate her for the dying years. She had become a sick and broken old woman, so ponderously fat that she could scarcely walk. In her large blue eyes lay a dull, apathetic look. She suffered grievously from indigestion and was almost always ill. She suffered, too, because, realising that she was being forgotten by the world, she felt herself piteously deserted and abandoned. She still had a circle of friends, but it had sadly dwindled. Often she sat down at her table alone with her lady-companions—a table richly laid with fine dishes and good foods which she dared not eat. She slept a great part of the day. Now sleep was to her the best thing in life—and when she slept she snored heavily, noisily. The dying years lay about her. She lived only in memories of the days when she was queen of Talleyrand's *salon*. Occasionally still she received, but only very occasionally, and then, roused temporarily from the deep gloom of depression into which she had sunk, she spoke only of the past.

Alone with her thoughts and the shadows of yester-year, she sat in her richly furnished house, a taciturn, half-forgotten old woman with large, wistful eyes. Sometimes she thought of death. Would she die alone, alone in the dark, alone among the shadows? . . . George Grand, Philip Francis, Edouard Dillon, San Carlos, Lambertye, Spinola and Delessart—they were all dead. Napoleon and Fouché, the Red Partridge, the Duchess of Courland, Madame de Staël and the old Countess Tyskiewitz—

dead, dead, dead. Where, she wondered, was dear, generous Thomas Lewin, and what had happened to gallant Nathaniel Belchier? . . . But Talleyrand still lived, Talleyrand and the "Countess Edmond" whom people now called the Duchess de Dino. How she hated that woman!

Sometimes it seemed to her that the life on which she sat looking back was not her own at all but some other woman's life. It appeared so strangely remote. Ah, but it was hers and it had been real and intense once, filled with shadows and light, lots of light, bright light. She had enjoyed it so much, and it had all gone so quickly. Yet it had been a long life—very long. Only the last years had brought her pain, pain and loneliness.

Sadly, her heart filled with yearning for her departed glory, Catherine de Talleyrand sailed towards the setting sun. The burden of life was growing too heavy for her to bear. She seldom spoke, and when she did it was always of Talleyrand and the years of her glory or of what was passing in his house. She was deeply concerned about everything connected with him. Her interest was so concentrated, so violent, that it became an obsession with her. She insisted that the routine of her house, to its smallest detail, should be strictly regulated in accordance with that practised at the Rue Saint-Florentin. Even her diet, and the times at which she took her meals, were subjected to this same stern law of imitation. With so much vehemence and accuracy did she persist in this mania that, at one time, she became seriously ill as a result of her scrupulous observance of Talleyrand's habits—in particular his practice of eating only one meal a day.

Yet, though she was old and forlorn and often ill, Catherine would rouse herself ponderously to play the dignified hostess and great princess when rare visitors called or Talleyrand sent a member of his household to inquire after her health. Then, very graciously, she

would receive in her drawing-room, regally seated in a high-backed chair which bore the arms and motto of the Talleyrand family, her back to a window, her head and neck beautifully poised, the folds of her magnificent gown neatly arranged about her feet which rested on a monogrammed stool. A sort of muslin coiffure covered most of her hair—that once luxuriant head of golden hair. It had turned quite grey, except for one solitary golden tress, last emblem of her lyrical beauty. To her head-dress chin-straps of white ribbon were attached which concealed her cheeks and neck and made her face look infinitely small. The effect was by no means unbecoming, for not only did these bands of ribbon and muslin hide the wrinkled ravages of time, but somehow, strangely, they seemed to give even greater grandeur of mien to this extremely dignified old lady.

Always the drawing-room in which the Princess received her guests was shrouded in a soft, tempered light. If the day was very bright, the shutters on the window behind her chair were partially closed, leaving only a narrow slit through which a ray of sunlight might slip to play with the one remaining golden streak upon her head. For Catherine de Talleyrand was still vain, still hungry for praise and delicate flattery, still blindly proud of her nobility.

CHAPTER III

I

THE SUMMER OF 1835 WAS DRAWING TO ITS CLOSE. A year had gone by since Talleyrand's renouncement of public life and service. The aged Prince was far from well. The passing of so many of his contemporaries—particularly of the Countess Tyskiewitz—had affected him deeply and created a poignant impression on his mind. Much of his old gaiety and spirit had vanished. He was often languid and depressed and spoke with melancholy despondency of death and the cessation of his own life. His ill-health made him nervous and gloomy. He was unduly anxious about himself and extremely agitated by the fact that there was a perceptible pause at every sixth beat of his pulse. Frequently Dorothéa de Dino would find him alone in his study, engrossed in reading medical books on heart-disease. She was gravely concerned about his mental and physical debility, and one morning in October, when a message was brought to the Rue Saint-Florentin that the Princesse de Talleyrand was lying at death's door as the result of a stroke, her anxiety turned to acute alarm. Would there be another death and must she again break the news to Talleyrand? How would he react to it in his present condition? What consequences would follow? She was not so much afraid of the actual shock of bereavement, for she knew quite well that "his heart is not interested," but she was terrified that the passing of "a person much of his own

age, with whom he had lived and of whom he had once been fond, or who had been so indispensable to him that he had given her his name," would aggravate his ill-health.

For a long time she sat in her room debating whether she should or should not tell him the tidings that she had received so early in the morning. At last she decided that it would, perhaps, be best to prepare him for what was coming. So she went to him. Tacitly she spoke of a number of things, and from these worked round to that which lay uppermost in her mind. In an indirect way she gave him to understand that his wife was dying. He listened quietly while she talked, without interruption, without showing the slightest emotion of any kind. When she ceased to speak he broke the silence that followed not by comment on what he had just heard but by changing the subject and talking of something else !

All that day he never once mentioned Catherine's danger. But the next he spoke of it almost incessantly—not sorrowfully, but calmly and dispassionately, and not directly of Catherine but only of the various arrangements that would have to be made if she died, of the funeral, of the cards to be sent out. Repeatedly he complained that it would be "an embarrassment to be in mourning." Never once, with a single word or the slightest tremor of a nerve, did he express grief or regret. He did not feign what he did not feel. Nothing was left of his love. All that he was conscious of was relief. If Catherine died he would be released from a duty. With her passing the one scandal in his life which he had never been able to live down would at last disappear in the shallow forgetfulness of memory. "If the Princess dies," he told Dorothea calmly, again and again, "I shall go out of Paris for a week or a fortnight."

For hours he busied himself with certain financial questions which would arise at Catherine's demise, for with her passing he would regain possession not only of

the comfortable allowance which he made to her annually but also of certain moneys in which she had a life interest. He took no pains to hide either the gratification which he felt at the possibility of once again owning this wealth, or the pleasure and satisfaction which he took in the thought that in the eyes of the Church, if Catherine died, he would no longer be a married priest. All day he was calm and serene. He had not been in such a tranquil mood for a long time. At moments, even, he seemed quite gay, and once Dorothéa de Dino caught him humming a little tune.

"Is it the fact that you will soon be a widower that puts you in such good spirits?" she asked him.

He looked at her quizzically and pulled a funny face like an impudent, mischievous child. Then glibly he went on talking of all the things that would have to be done if Catherine died and of how pleasant it would be to have an increased income. . . . But Catherine did not die. She recovered sufficiently from her seizure to be able to sit in her high-backed chair again and to receive the messengers he sent to her house with courteous inquiries after her health.

Relentlessly the clock on her mantelpiece with its coat of arms and its *Re que Dieu* ticked away the minutes of the dying year. The trees in the Champs-Élysées turned yellow with autumn-sickness. A cold wind scattered the seared submissive leaves. Rain fell and December came.

II

The parlour of the nuns of Saint-Michel in the Rue Saint-Jacques where Monseigneur de Quélen, Archbishop of Paris, was giving an ecclesiastical audience, was warm and bright with the light of many burning candles. Outside it was bleak and cold and dark on this December evening at six o'clock. A sudden stir and whispering at

the parlour door disturbed the Archbishop's speech. Someone came hurriedly forward to inform him that a lady who had just arrived, wished to see him urgently, most urgently. She had a message for him from a dying person. Would he speak to her? . . . Since it was so urgent, he would see her instantly. He asked that she be brought to him. A moment later the Duchesse d'Esclignac, daughter of Baron Boson de Talleyrand-Périgord, second brother of the fabulous old Prince de Talleyrand, entered the room.

"Monseigneur, forgive me," she apologised breathlessly. "But my aunt . . . She is dying."

"Your aunt, Duchesse?"

"The Princesse de Talleyrand, monseigneur."

The Archbishop inclined his head.

"She is asking for you," the Duchesse continued, hurriedly. "She wishes to make her confession, but desires to make her acknowledgment of sin to no one but you, monseigneur. I pray you, forgive me for this intrusion. I had to speak with you, for there is not a moment to lose. The doctors say she will not last the night. . . ."

Monseigneur de Quélen dismissed the audience. A few minutes later, with his two Grand Vicars, the Abbé Affre and the Abbé Quentin, he was on his way in the Duchesse's carriage to save that passing soul in the Rue de Bourbon which once had been called the Rue de Lille. Beside him the Duchesse sat dabbing her eyes with a small damp handkerchief. She was deeply distressed, for between her and her aunt, the Princesse de Talleyrand, there was a real bond of affection and understanding.

III

The room where Catherine lay dozing on her bed near the window was shrouded in subdued light. Only the candles in two tall silver candelabra—one at the head of her bed shedding a pool of light on her drawn, strangely blue-grey face—dispelled the darkness. She was quite alone; she had asked to be alone so that she might put her thoughts in order before making her confession.

At Monseigneur de Quélen's entrance she raised herself ponderously from her pillows and in a low whisper thanked him for coming to her so readily. She was deeply moved at seeing him and the effort of raising herself exhausted her. Heavily she sank back, her eyes closed, breathing stertorously. It took some moments before she was able to speak. "Monseigneur, what I am about to say—I should like to repeat before my friends. Will you be so kind, my lord, and call them in—all of them—the Duchesse d'Esclignac, the Comtesse de Champeron, the Marquise de Vins de Pezac and my two lady's-maids. They are in the next room. I desired that they should leave me alone for a while, so that I might prepare myself for this moment."

They came, her friends and her servants, and gathered about her bed, and with them came the two Grand Vicars. Propped up against her pillows Catherine sat looking at them, looking at one face, then another. For a long time she did not speak. She remained silent, her heart too full for words, seeing the tears in the eyes that her eyes sought. Her lips trembled. "My friends," she whispered. "My friends." The words echoed like a sigh through the room.

But suddenly she spoke in a firmer, an almost resolute

voice. "Monseigneur, they are all here," she said. "And this is what I wish to say before them. That I am glad to be reconciled to God, and after asking His pardon, I beg pardon of men for any scandal I have caused." A sigh escaped hissingly from her parted lips. Her eyelids flickered and closed. She lay very still, utterly exhausted by the effort she had made.

Monseigneur turned to the Abbé Quentin and bade him go to the Church of St. Thomas d'Aquin to fetch the Eucharist and the holy oils. The Abbé departed hurriedly. No sooner had he left the room than Catherine roused herself from her half-stupor and begged to speak in private to Monseigneur de Quélen.

"Am I indeed dying, my lord, and is there no hope for me?" she asked him when the others had withdrawn and they were quite alone.

He answered her "out of the fullness of his benevolent heart," tried to comfort her with vague hope and urged her to put her trust in God and in her faith and love for Him. Monseigneur was most kind, but in his words of gentle encouragement she read the truth and knew that her end was near. She remained quite calm, showed no sign of distress. Quietly she asked him to send for two caskets which she kept locked in an iron chest. When these were brought to her—one of red morocco, the other of wood, both neatly tied with white silk ribbon and sealed in wax with her arms, the armorial design of the Talleyrand-Périgords—she gave them to him with her own hands.

"Monseigneur, I give these to you for safe-keeping," she said. "If I get well"—for a second a smile flitted across her lips—"if I get well, you will give them back to me. If not, I beg that you will give them to my dear niece, the Duchesse d'Esclignac." She drew a sheaf of francs in banknotes from under her pillow. "And these—these are for the poor. Two thousand francs."

serene she sailed with the minutes to eternity. In the small hours of the morning, on the 10th of December, a fit of choking suddenly seized her. The nurse who sat watching at her side tried to make her sip a few drops of water. But she could no longer swallow. The awful sweat of agony broke out on her grey-blue face framed in its dishevelled profusion of white hair. The room grew dark about her. She could no longer see the flickering candles. Her head fell forward on her chest. Her lips moved. "I am dying," she whispered.

It was a quarter to four in the morning. Catherine de Talleyrand sighed and passed away.

IV

Talleyrand himself was ill at this time and confined in his house in the Rue Saint-Florentin. When the news of Catherine's death was brought to Dorothea de Dino early in the morning, she shrank from breaking it to him for, though he had shown so little emotion on the previous occasion when his wife lay in grave danger, she greatly feared that this moment of death in its reality would shock him deeply. She was relieved that he was still asleep when the messenger came, resting quietly after a slight heart-attack which had "abated on the application of mustard to his legs." This gave her time to put her thoughts in order, to plan how best to break the news to him. But Dorothea de Dino distressed herself quite unnecessarily at the anticipation of her painful duty, for, when Talleyrand woke from his sleep and she told him, tactfully and very gently, that his princess was dead, he showed no agitation, no remorse. "That simplifies my position very much," was the only comment that he made.

All that day he wore a little smile. He felt tranquil

and at peace with the world. A fat old woman had died and he would be the richer for her death. Only of this did he think. Not one thought did he give to the woman herself, whose beauty, almost half a century ago, had brought him limping to her feet. . . . But if Talleyrand would not allow his mind to dwell on her, at least her passing touched the heart of another who had once loved her—and gallantly. In distant England old Thomas Lewin, now eighty-two years old, wrote in his diary on the 15th December, 1835: "Heard that the Princesse Talleyrand was dead." For a long time, it is said, he sat staring at those words. Perhaps he was dreaming of his youth and of the woman who had inspired one of its sweetest interludes.

For Catherine de Talleyrand, Princesse de Bénévent, whom the Church still called the widow of George François Grand, a solemn service was held on the 12th of December, 1835, in the Church of St. Thomas d'Aquin. Talleyrand, who had not once been present at her bedside during the days of her illness, did not appear at the funeral rites and ceremony. His confidential agent, Monsieur Demion, who had arranged all matters connected with the obsequies, represented the aged prince at the funeral and watched the body of "Catherine, widow of George François Grand, connue civilement comme Princesse de Talleyrand," aged seventy-four, laid to rest in the cemetery of Montparnasse.

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NOTE.—Most of the dialogue in this book is based on the memoirs of this period.

